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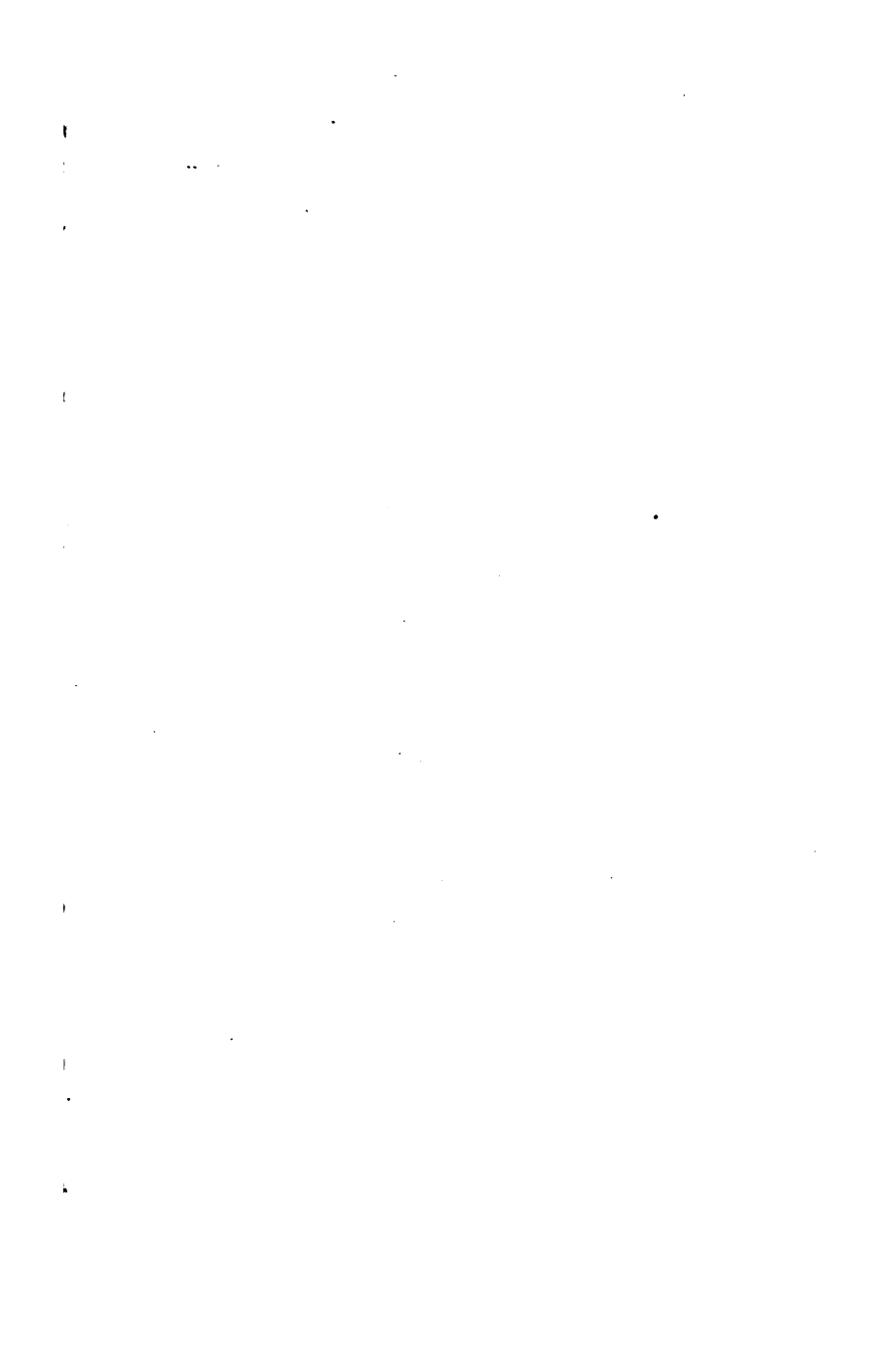
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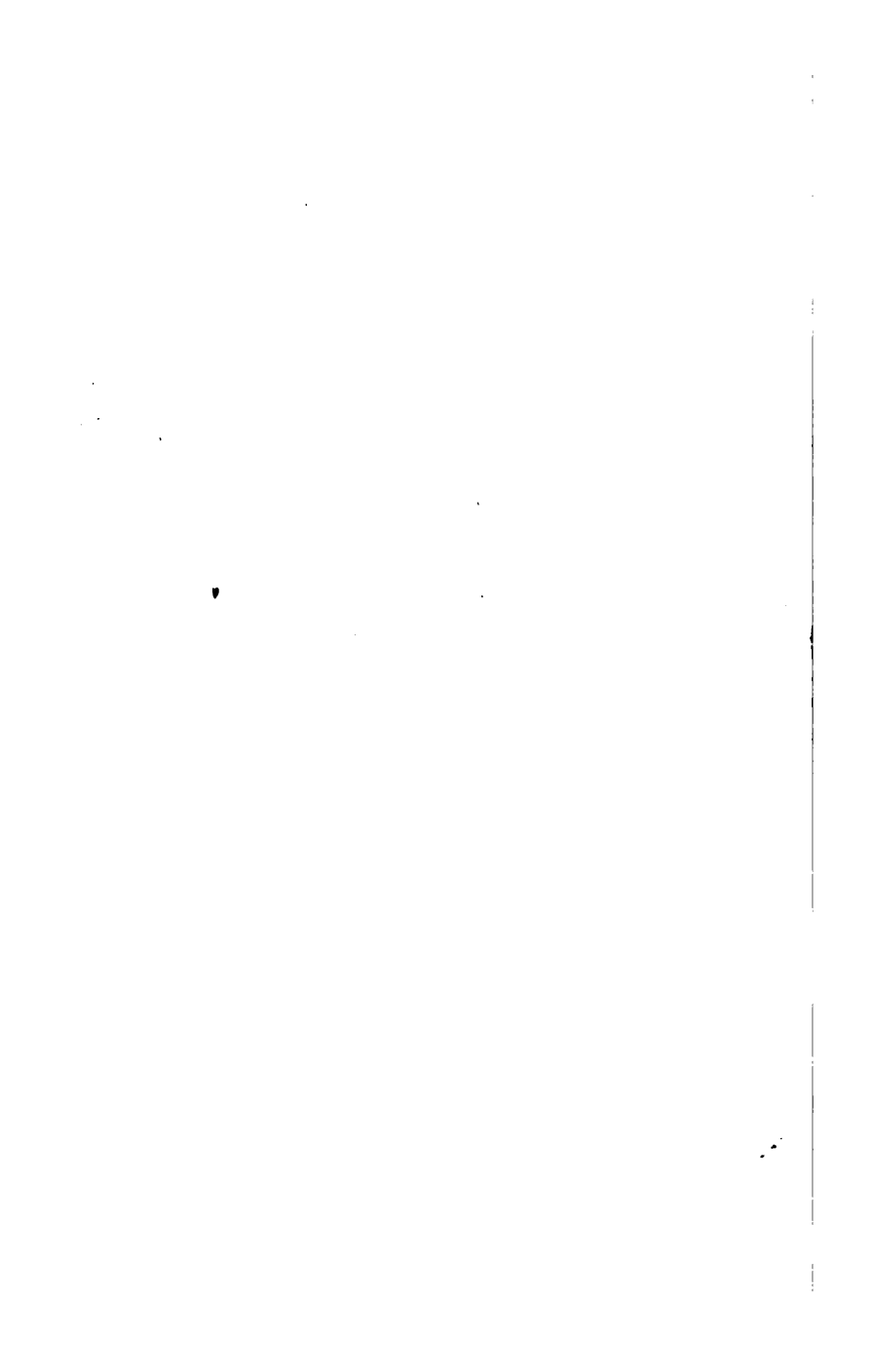
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**ABERDEEN WORTHIES.**



THE  
ABERDEEN WORTHIES:

OR,  
SKETCHES OF CHARACTERS

RESIDENT IN ABERDEEN

DURING THE END OF THE LAST AND BEGINNING  
OF THE PRESENT CENTURY.

BY  
W. BANNERMAN.

~~~~~  
"How sad it is, yet sweet,  
To look through memory's mirror to the days  
That shone like gold, yet melted down like haze."  
MRS. HEMANS.  
~~~~~

ABERDEEN:  
LEWIS SMITH AND SAMUEL MACLEAN.

MDCCCXL.



PRINTED AT THE ABERDEEN CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICE,  
BY GEO. CORNWALL.

## PREFACE.

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IN submitting this little Work to the Public, the Editor begs leave to remark, that the greater number of these Sketches were originally written as private correspondence, merely for amusement, without any intention of their meeting the public eye. A few of them, however, found their way into the *Aberdeen Observer*, and were well received, not only by the elder citizens, but likewise by many individuals of acknowledged good taste, to whom the originals were entirely unknown. For these reasons, the Editor has been emboldened to originate and carry out the present undertaking.

It has been suggested by some, perhaps rather fastidious critics, that there was an impropriety in introducing such respectable characters as Provost Cruden in the same group with Peter Wilson, and others of his grade; he can only say, in answer to this objection, that there was not, nay, there could not be, the most distant idea of meaning any disparagement to the worthy magistrate by so doing. It is most willingly allowed, that he was a highly respectable and honourable man, and an excellent member of society.

Some other individuals sketched, are admitted to have been exuberances. Society, however, is composed of many different shades of character, and death levels all distinctions. "Dead Lords rank with Commoners."

Every possible care has been taken to avoid giving offence to living relations and friends, and some sketches of well-known characters have been suppressed (perhaps to appear at some future period), on purpose to avoid causing unpleasant reflections to connexions, even although nothing offensive had been written or meant.

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The following Letter from the Author to the Editor accompanied the first Sketch :—

LONDON, January, 1832.

DEAR C.—Sitting one cold, raw night in the *Salopian*, rather in a solitary mood, and having read the leading articles in the different papers of the day, from some accident I was led into a train of thinking upon times long gone by, of early homes, parents, children, and

"The dear school-boy spot,  
We ne'er forget, tho' there we are forgot,"

bringing with it a train of pleasing associations, and the recollection of our earlier happy days, and grave pursuits of ripe manhood, and each succeeding year bringing along with it, slowly, important events, which have listlessly (and, with me, unprofitably), rolled away since that period to the present. I thought of the companions of my boyhood—made them pass in review before me—mustered them, and found, with a few exceptions, that they were only as those that had been, and that they had passed away, and were now numbered among the millions of former ages. I thought of the neighbourhood, the Plainstones, and the Cross, with its regular supporters, who, from my earliest recollection, took their stand, every lawful day, at its different angles; and without any previous intention, but the whim of the moment, I selected one out of the group, and thought it might amuse you to endeavour to sketch the man, as he appeared to my mind's eye to have been some five-and-forty years ago. I went on, and, growing pleased with the fruit of my labour, I have continued (when in the humour), till it has arrived at its present bulk, and if you enjoy some portion of the pleasure in reading, which I have had in writing, I shall be satisfied.

I must confess, it was sometimes a pleasure of a melancholy nature, yet it was still a pleasure of a superlative kind, which, while reason and memory hold their seats, neither poverty nor riches, nor change of circumstances, or climate, can either alter, impair or destroy.

W. BANNERMAN.

To Mr. W. CHISHOLM,  
*Aberdeen.*

*Note.*—To his friend, Mr. Chisholm, who first proposed, and has got up this publication entirely at his own expense, the Author would thus publicly make offer of his most grateful thanks.

To other individuals who have kindly taken an interest in the little work, the obligation is sincerely acknowledged.

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## ABERDEEN WORTHIES,

&c.

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### STATIO ROSS.

WHO, of half a century's standing in Aberdeen, does not recollect old Sandy Ross, *alias* Statio Ross, *alias* the Flying Stationer? Saunders, when young, must have been a fine, tall, straight man, of I should think, six feet high; rather thin, but sufficiently muscular for any ordinary occupation; a face long in proportion, and a little pitted with the small pox; of a dark complexion; and his general outline of features not indicating any great originality, or otherwise. I think he belonged to the fraternity of Crispin; but if he was a *snoob*, he had more strings to his bow than a birse en', and certainly preferred inhaling the fresh breeze that came from Marischal Street, to boring his nose over the sweaty insole of an old shoe.

Sandy was certainly a man of importance in his time; he was a fellow of "rare jest and exquisite fancy," and one who (considering the limited stage of his existence) played many parts. He was the

"brief chronicle of his time," and the general channel for circulating all the local, personal or political squibs of the day. If it was a political effusion, and required the aid of a tune to set it off, the stationer was fully efficient for this part of the business; and according to the nature of his subject, could select accordingly, whether it was a melancholy air of the moralizing kind of "Death and the Lady;" or the more roaring, cheering, whack, tear-away, "Twelve Bottle More" sort, with all their intermediate gradations. If in dull prose, it lost nothing of its merit in the Stationer's hands, by the broad vein of sarcastic humour, which he naturally had at his command, to embellish and give effect to gain customers. I can recollect seeing Statio holding forth in the evenings; and if we were to judge from the crowd that collected round him, and the frequent bursts of hearty laughter that proceeded from them, we may conclude they were much gratified.

Sandy might be seen occasionally stepping along the streets with a small basket on his arm containing old china. I think he was the only professional man in the mending way we had at that time. He used to drop in upon the old publicans as he went along, to inquire if any mishap had befallen their punch-bowls, or best cups and saucers. Sandy, like most men of genius, was very fond of a "drap o' a dram," and could distinguish as well as most men, your true "peat-reek," from the

"wile potato trash." And, among his other qualifications, he was naturally a polite man, and could measure his ground, and deal out to a shaving, the quantum, and kind of compliments, the party he addressed might be supposed to expect. Sandy, in his calls on his old friends, the publicans, was always looked upon rather in the light of an old friend than as an itinerant mender of old china; and he was always treated with respect accordingly.

The mending of old china might be called Sandy's more retired occupation; but, on Friday mornings, Statio might be seen emerging from the archway of the New Inn, with a show-box on his back, slung in the manner of a soldier's knapsack, and a small tressel under his arm, on the principle of a camp-stool, walking forward to the middle of Castle Street, half way between the Cross, and where the well formerly stood, taking especial care not to intrude upon the long established privilege of "Willie o' the Wall," on the one hand, nor, on the other, to approach too closely the elbow of old Murray, who sold ginger-bread snaps and Gibraltar rock.

All things being duly arranged, the back of the box facing the south, the darkening boards lifted up, and the little slides raised from the magical glasses, Sandy stood ready to receive his little customers; he could only accommodate three at a time, but deigned to proceed often with fewer. He had about twelve subjects in his box, and having often been a customer, I could, long after I had



arrived at manhood, have shown up the whole of Statio's box, *verbatim et literatim*. I can now only recollect a few, but these will be sufficient to *show up the man*. Then suppose Sandy's little customers standing on their tip-toes, all anxiety, he thus proceeds:—"Look at that, Gentlemen, there is a grand view of the Taking of Quebec, in North America,—where you will see all the flat-bottomed boats going up the shallow rivers, taking possession of Bunker's Hill; drums beating, fifes playing, colours flying, and every other preparation of warlike demonstration carrying on. (Pause—shifting.) Look at that, again, see—look at that, Gentlemen; there is a very GRAND view of St. Peter's Church, at Rome. The Pope says the gates of hell cannot prevail against that church, neither shake it, nor tremble it; but faith if it be upon my back in a windy day, it shakes me most damnably. (Pause, and shifting.) Now, look at that, Gentlemen; only look at that. (Pause.) Here is a very grand view of the whole Royal Family of Great Britain, in figures of real wax-work—full five feet six inches high; all dressed in their royal robes, covered all over with jewels, pearls, and fine gold. And last of all, Gentlemen, is the Wandering Jew of Jerusalem, who is doomed to walk this earth until the day of judgment." This Wandering Jew of Sandy's was neither more nor less than a little figure in the position of a shoemaker at work, who (by Sandy pulling a string at the back

of the box) kept working away as if the devil himself had been in him. I think there was something of true benevolence in Sandy, (when we consider the unalterable doom of the poor Israelite) in making him belong to a profession, the members of which are generally cheerful, even to a proverb.

Thus did the worthy stationer show up for many a day; but there came a frost one day, "a nipping frost," and Sandy suffered severely for his joke's sake. You will recollect the raising of Colonel Leith's regiment,—it was a most important epoch in miracle-working; our Lady of Loretto, or the more modern Prince Hohenlohe, were nothing to the Colonel in this way. The Colonel gave eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, and the halt and deformed he made to walk straight. Among others, you will no doubt recollect a stout middle-aged *blind* man, always accompanied with a stout cummer of a caird-looking wife, his hand generally resting on her shoulder, who for years entertained his Majesty's liege subjects of the good town with some of the more sublime productions of the day, such as the "Banks of Clyde—High Jenny, high, or low, Jenny, low—wi' four excellent new sangs, a' i' the same ballant, for ae bawbee." This man dwelt among us, and passed for a blind man for years; but the powerful efficacy of the Colonel's touch restored the man to his *sight*. The Colonel, to give his recruits something of a passable appearance, clothed them in a regimental undress, and

they certainly stood much in need of something of this kind, for Falstaff himself would certainly have declined going through Coventry with such a squad. However, the day of embodying the troops at last arrived, and a great many were put aside by the general, as unfit for service. The Colonel considered the undress as his own private property, and in consequence caused these unfits to be stripped rather unceremoniously ; this was done in so unseemly a manner, that the kind-hearted females of the east end of the town were under the necessity of lending them clothes, for decency's sake.

This created a tremendous hue and cry against the Colonel, and the Stationer considered this a fit subject to appear upon the stage of his *sans pareil*. Whether he had a picture or not, is of no consequence now-a-days ; but Sandy actually showed up the gallant Colonel and his naked regiment in his own humorous and sarcastic manner.

The man of war felt so much hurt under the lash of the Stationer's sarcasms, that their Honours the Magistrates were applied to, and poor Sandy was sent to prison for one month, and the unoffending box was ordered to be burnt at the market-place, by the hands of the common executioner. This part of the sentence was accordingly carried into effect, while Sandy stood at the window of "the Burgher's room," and witnessed the sad catastrophe.

Oh ! what a sight was there ! In one ignomi-

nious pile fell the great St. Peter's of Rome, and the whole Royal Family of Great Britain. The Stationer weathered out the period of his imprisonment, and, in a few days after, made his public appearance among his friends, with a printed poetical address, soliciting their assistance to begin the world afresh. The appeal was happily not made in vain. This poetical address (as the booksellers would say), of Alexander Ross is now become *scarce*, and it is only to be found in the libraries of the *learned*, or in the hands of the *black-letter* book-collecting portion of the community: we shall, therefore give an extract. It began as follows:—

“ Stern winter now—with cruel, ruthless hand,  
Has spread his chilly carpet o'er the land.  
So very high the price of beef and coal—  
And whisky too! the comfort of my soul.  
Indeed, my friends, I'm now come to death's door—  
Help, or your Flying Stationer's no more.”

With the profits arising from this well-timed effusion, Sandy was soon enabled to take up his old position, with a new *box* and new *subjects*. For these of themselves, I felt no interest, farther than the gratification which arose in seeing official ignorance exposed,—the mean subserviency to military rank and tyranny entirely defeated, and a worthy old man again in that station, however humble, which he had so long filled in the busy, bustling drama of life. This was, I believe, the only in-

stance wherein the Stationer *legally* suffered for his talent in satire and caricature. Sandy, by virtue of his vocation, was a self-elected magistrate and public censor. The man must have had a heart of lead, and a timmer-cap kind of a skull, who would not have winced under the sarcastic lash of old Saunders Ross, and those griping individuals who were notorious for taking every undue advantage of a casual scarcity in the articles they dealt in, were, if they so offended, sure to make a ridiculous appearance, the first market day, in Sandy's public institution.

Sandy held another public situation, viz. Convener's Officer to the Trades' Boys. He was also employed by the young men of the whole Seven Incorporations, in calling meetings of their individual trade, or for general processions. But the Stationer's most dignified occupation was as Convener's Officer in their juvenile processions, and in that capacity, taking the lead in them. I think I see him at this moment,—his fine, tall, aged figure, his blue painted ornamented cap, with his long two-handed sword,—heading a procession of well-dressed youths, carrying the different insignia of their professions. Sandy seemed perfectly conscious of the importance of his situation, if one was to judge from the gravity of his step, his portly bearing, and his general commanding appearance.

It is to be regretted that Irvine who, in his picture of the Castle Street of Aberdeen, has handed

down to posterity Wattie Leith, Davie Frost, and bare-birr-headed blind Jamie, should have omitted such a characteristic accompaniment as old Sanders Ross and his Box.

Sandy continued filling up the links of the great chain of life, as long as old age, with its many increasing infirmities permitted him; but the last time I saw him it was evident from the stoop in his gait, the support he needed from his stick, his sallow complexion, and strong hectic cough, that he had nearly "strutted his hour," and that the curtain would soon drop upon old Saunders Ross and his various vocations, and close the scene for ever.

In concluding this humble attempt at sketching the outline of so singular a character as Alexander Ross, I may be allowed to remark, that, in my opinion, there was no individual in any grade, in his own time, living in Aberdeen, that could bear a comparison with him; and however humble his various vocations were, in the exercise of them he never forgot the dignity he owed to himself—as a worthy, decent citizen.

## WILLIE O' THE WALL.

IN drawing upon my recollection for matter connected with my old friend, Statio Ross, I naturally came in contact with another old acquaintance, in the person of "Willie o' the Wall and Sawnie i' the Meen," a character in every respect diametrically opposite to that of old Statio. He has no great claim to notice, either for originality or peculiar habits; but as one of those individuals who were so familiar to me for so many years, in their wonted stations at the Cross, I shall place him in the niche appointed for him in my gallery of the departed.

Walter Thom, in his History of Aberdeen, has wasted a great deal of time needlessly, besides wearing out the patience of his readers, in endeavouring to determine the derivation of its name; but had he bestowed a little of this unnecessary trouble in ascertaining the *unde derivatur* of this man's queer cognomen, it would have been something. If I might be allowed to give an opinion on a matter of such importance, I should say it had its derivation from Willie at one time having his stall at the top of Queen Street, on the remains of some half demolished garden wall, where the little shops are now built on the south side, (in my recollection

a waste spot) prior to the houses being generally built or the street had been paved. So much for the first part of this desideratum; but as for the second, I must, as Billy Black would say, "give it up," and must leave it to the more erudite research of the gentlemen of the Antiquarian Society. I have always retained my school-boy idea on the subject of the moon's inhabitants, which was, that they were a buoyant, transparent, kind sort of elves, altogether unlike their representative that dwelt among us, for if he did possess any of these qualities, he was like a dark lantern lighted with the shade always down. I think he belonged to the "Come-out-from-among-them" set of christians—the rigidly righteous, or unco guid, whose extra pretensions to superior holiness and moral rectitude are more than doubted by many of their christian brethren, and who are of such a gloomy temperament of mind that, as some one observes, had their opinion been asked at the creation, neither a bird would have been allowed to sing, a tree to bud, or a flower to blossom, either to cheer or adorn the humble abode of mankind. Willie was a very short man; thin, and of a sallow complexion; and of a gloomy, suspicious, revengeful cast of features, and a small turn in one of his eyes completed the satanic physiognomy of Wallie o' the Wall.

Willie might have been seen every morning (Sundays excepted) wending his way up the Nether-kirkgate, with a jog-trot kind of step, so universally



acquired by the now nearly defunct fraternity of pack-merchants, steering his course towards Castle Street, carrying a pair of tressels and other appendages of his stall ; his decent, trig, little body of a wife following in his wake, with the covering of his stall wrapped round her shoulders and waist, and carrying the more light articles of their joint stock ; and having arrived at the long-frequented spot, the east side of the Cross, with the assistance of the goodwife the stall was soon erected ; it was of small dimensions, about five feet long and three feet wide, covered in all round, unless in front.—Willie was professionally what would be called in London by the plain hard name of an ironmonger, but in the classic city of Aberdeen, by the more elegant appellation of a hardware merchant. His goods, which were of the cheapest description, principally to meet the wants of the country lads and lasses, consisted (*inter alia*) of three-bawbee jock-the-legs, knives and forks, penknives, threepenny paper penners, razors, needles, bawbee brass *prins*, *gartens*, knee and shoe buckles, and a variety of sleeve-buttions, from the plain brass pattern up to the more showy glass pebble, with all its *elegant* variety of colour and device ; and the back and sides of the stall were hung round with a beggarly account of the cheapest looking-glasses, to make up a show, the most of which, from their coarseness of material and inequality of surface, would have turned a very Venus into a Satyr. But besides his merchandiz-

ing, William had another string to his bow—he was also a working tradesman.

At this period, and long before, buckles were universally worn by both sexes, of every age and circumstance, and the cheap sort were very apt to break ; a mender of buckles, therefore, was essentially necessary to meet accidents, and this desideratum was to be found in our friend Willie o' the Wall. Willie had for his supporters, on the dexter side, fronting the south, Mr. Jacob Blackwell, gingerbread-baker, but better known by the familiar appellation of *Lemon-cakie* ; and on the sinister side, fronting the north, sat Mrs. Elizabeth Oswald, general dealer, known to her little customers by the diminutive of *Little Betty Osly*.

These out-of-door merchants were rather a wet set, but social among one another, and led a pretty careless, pretty merry sort of life ; they were a give-and-take sort of folk, and most of them could, from their own daily practical experience, determine the comparative merits of Hoggie Geordie's best penny-whip, to that of his neighbour's, Whisky Harry, who kept his shop at the top of Luxemburg's Close, and sold real Ferintosh, at five farthings the gill ; but William was none of those ; he was an unsocial being who would neither have eaten, drank, nor prayed with any one where his interest was not concerned. It was, you will perceive, no difficult matter at this period for a person to get drunk for twopence,—glorious for threepence, and, if it so pleased him,

for another penny, perfectly *useless*. We of the present day are rather astonished at the apparent cheapness of whisky at this period, 1790, but we must take the comparative amount of wages before we can judge correctly. When I went to trade, five years after this date, the journeymen wrights' wages was 7s. per week; in the year 1810, I paid a journeyman 17s. per week, being a rise of 150 per cent. on wages in 15 years.

We left William selling his jock-the-legs and brass *prins*, and mending buckles, and he might have led a very quiet sort of life, if it had not been for the irritability of his temper. If a person only looked at him a little steadily, it was returned by a strange revengeful scowl, sufficiently indicative of the enemy to his peace which he carried in his breast. Boys soon find out this failing in their elders, and are adepts in turning it to their own amusement; and William, in his many journeyings from Coutts' Close, at Wallace-nook, to Castle Street, seldom escaped the unwelcome greetings of his young friends; but his principal tormentors were the loons about the Plainstones. He was one of their lions, or in theatrical language, a stock play, which they performed when other novelties ceased to please; for after they had run over their usual amusements, and at the same time run themselves out of breath, and wanted some less active excitement, they only had to turn round the Cross, and their stood their old friend William, and from

their long practice and frequent rehearsals, they were perfectly masters of the piece. Their manner of attack was as follows :—Two or three went first, and brushed up close to the stall, on purpose to draw his attention, then the others joined, and retiring as far back as to be without the range of his yard measure, they began the well-known ditty—

“ That's Willie o' the Wall,  
In his very little stall;  
In his very little stall  
Sits Willie o' the Wall.”

During this serenade, Willie began to clear away his punches, pincers, hammers, and other moveables, from the shop-board, occasionally flourishing his yard measure *in terrorem*. By this manœuvre the attacking party were aware that a sortie would soon be made from the garrison, and prepared accordingly. Retiring still farther back, they began the grand chorus of—

“ Willie o' the Wall and Sawnie i' the Meen,  
Wha gead up the Castlegate and ran down the Green.”

This being bawled out with all the strength their young lungs and shrill pipes were master of, was more than Willie's patience could longer bear; for arming himself with his yard measure, he jumped over the board, and gave chase to the enemy; but all in vain, for they were too nimble for him, besides they knew he could not run far, leaving his

goods unprotected. The rallying point in these cases was always the back of the well, where they could reconnoitre the enemy in perfect safety ; waiting patiently, therefore, till William retired within his citadel, they then furnished themselves with sundry light missiles, which were abundant in the streets before the establishment of our excellent Police ; and being all duly armed, they deployed upon the flanks of the enemy in two divisions, and on a signal given, fired off their whole artillery upon the poor stall.—This being the finale, they then retired to seek some other amusement.

It may be here remarked, that their only aim was to vex, not to injure their old friend ; and having effected this, they left him to cool his temper at his leisure.

I learned only a short time ago that this man's name was Alexander Reid, and that he left some property behind him when he died.

## DEAF JOE.

~~~~~

Who, among the *fifty-year-auids* in Aberdeen, does not recollect an individual, who, particularly on Sundays, always made his appearance in public, neat and clean, as if out of a *band-box*. He was a man rather below the middle size, his person *symmetry* itself, round face, with light-blue eyes and rather sallow in the complexion. His dress generally was a pepper-and-salt or black coat, silk vest, clean buckskin breeches of the first quality, made to fit tight, silk stockings, and particularly neat shoes and buckles, wearing always fine *chamois* gloves, with a genteel walking-cane in his hand, and a spy-glass in his pocket. I have no doubt you will recognise the outlines of what Mr. Joseph Alexander, leather-breeches-maker was, some five-and-thirty years ago, and who, from an infirmity in his hearing, was more generally known by the familiar term of "Deaf Joe." London had the honour of Joe's birth; his father had been a wild youth, whose character Joe, when speaking of him, summed up in few words, "He was a worthless blackguard." He had gone the length of his tether, and afterwards enlisted into the guards, and was presented with a son and

heir while in that situation, in the person of poor *Joe*. Joe at an early age was sent down to Aberdeen, to his grandfather, who was a respectable master tradesman, as a leather-breeches-maker, and for many years had a little shop next door to John Ewen, west end of Castle Street.

As soon as Joe was able to handle the needle, he was set to work at breeches-making, with the old gentleman, and continued with him till within a few years of the old man's death. Joe always treated his grandfather with respect, though sometimes he and his companions used to attack the old man's weak side, and raise a laugh at his expense, which Mr. Alexander always resented by walking out of the shop, bestowing a parting retort not very flattering to Joe's vanity; for Joe was certainly a very *vain* man, both of his person and attainments; his attainments being equal, if not superior, to most of the same rank in the "guid toun." He had read a good deal, and when I was old enough to have the *honour of a sitting* in his room, he had a small, yet select, library. His room was in a house in Burnett's Close, and was genteelly furnished; he had every thing respectable and comfortable in it necessary for a bachelor; a few fine prints by Bartolozzi hung round the room, and his own portrait over the mantel-piece. Joe, from his infirmity of not hearing any conversation distinctly, unless carried on in a tone somewhat disagreeably loud, was often obliged, unwillingly, to remain silent—I say

unwillingly, because possessing great conversational powers, and knowing his own superiority, he generally took the lead in conversation among his friends. From his deafness he had also been naturally obliged to seek within himself for sources of amusement, which had given him a habit of reflection and observation superior to most of his acquaintances, and far beyond what might have been expected from one in his sphere of life. He was put down among the community generally as a *droll kind of chap*, which was but a very poor compliment to a man of understanding.

All who ever conversed with Joe must recollect the position of his left hand on these occasions, which was his thumb behind his left ear, his second finger in front, and his fore-finger resting on the top of his ear, somewhat behind, in purpose to draw it forward like the mouth of a trumpet, to enable him to hear more distinctly. When I first came more immediately in contact with Joseph, I was young enough not to be allowed a chair at table. Joe dined with our family for many years, and my father being now dead, Joe, as a matter of courtesy, always occupied the easy chair in the corner at dinner, and, possessing the guidman's chair, said grace. It was short, but to the purpose; and, on this occasion, Joe always rested his elbow on the table, with his hand extended, and appeared to consider himself performing a solemn and necessary duty. I am thus particular, because his conduct



at an after period was much at variance from what it was at this.

My position was a standing at the top of the table between my mother and Joe, and he often deprived me of a nice bit, by remarking that it was a shame to indulge a youngster like me in that manner, and that it was actually doing me an injury. I considered him no great friend of mine at that time I assure you, but, I thought very differently at an after period.

Joe was never superseded in grace-saying but in the cases of two individuals. His grandfather became a widower a few years before his death, and after this occurrence Joe asked the liberty to invite his grandfather to dine with us on Christmas day, which was most willingly granted. Joe on these occasions gave up the chair to his grandfather, and my mother, as a mark of respect, desired the patriarchal old man to say grace. Occasionally Mr. James Mortimer, *merchant* in Ellon came to town, and on these occasions always domiciliated at the back o' the Tolbooth. He was a particularly strict, and I believe, a conscientious member of the Secession *Auld Light* community. Whether he considered Joe's grace too short, or according to the phrase of the day, not sufficiently *evangelical*, I cannot say, but that he might not be disappointed in asking a blessing in his own person, he stood up before it was even necessary, no doubt to give a timely hint to Joseph. James's grace was

both loud and long, and out of all proportion with the received standard of forms generally taught for such occasions, and he seldom received thanks for causing such unnecessary delay in proceeding with the more agreeable part of the occasion. There was something remarkable in James's general appearance, and he pronounced his grace in a strong, hard, provincial phraseology and accent, as was *then* generally used in the religious meetings of the sect to which he belonged. James was a fine proportioned man, of Herculean height and strength, he was above six feet high, with fine manly features, but had a gloomy, suspicious, restless kind of look. He resided for many years in Huxter Row, prior to his settling at Ellon. He was professionally a pack-merchant, and as such, was a well-known character, and travelled the country round Aberdeen many a day, but always made it a point to be in town on Fridays, and to take up his position among his brethren, according to seniority, on the south side of Castle Street.

But to return to Joe. He was a keen sportsman, and a most excellent shot, and was known as such by all the *sporting gemmen* in town and county. He was at this period universally employed by the gentlemen of the district as a leather-breeches-maker, for no gentleman was without a pair of these indispensables at that time of day. He also carried on the manufacturing of gloves and suspenders, and had his shop at the foot of Castle Street, near

where his grandfather had his, and carried on a profitable concern, and supported the station he held in society with becoming dignity. Fast days were always looked forward to by Joe with great pleasure. He was sure not to be found in town on those days. He seldom or ever kept a dog himself, and as dogs were generally much in request on such occasions, the principal matter with Joe was, where to get one worth anything for his purpose. If he could not procure one among his friends, or the promise of one, he set his wits to work to secure one at any hazard, and have him in safe keeping until the *morning of the fast*. He was several times threatened with prosecutions for these tricks, but always contrived to get out of the scrape generally by a present of *game* to the disappointed party, the owner of the dog. Strangers often called on Joe for information on shooting topics; on these occasions, he always fought very *shy*, but if he was convinced that the person was a sportsman, and understood the business of the field, he was always willing to give the information required.

He complained to me one day of the annoyance he experienced while in his room, and that his feelings were much hurt by the cats killing the birds while sporting on the trees and bushes in the garden before his window. "I have," said he, "declared *war* against all the feline tribe residing on the borders of Burnett's Close, and I intend opening the

campaign next Sunday morning." He would have carried on the war successfully with the means he always had in his possession, viz. his fowling-piece, but the noise would have spoiled all, and beside told tales. So Joe borrowed an air-gun, and employed William Anderson, the *wark man*, to charge it. I was invited to come and take an egg with him, and participate in his victory. We had not been long on the look-out, when up jumped a fine, fat, glossy Tommie Black, all glistening in the sun. "He is my landlady's," said Joe, "but no matter, his doom is sealed." The window having been previously drawn up, to prevent noise, after allowing Tom to crawl along till he had almost his prey between his paws, Joseph let fly with a whiff—poor Tommie Black gave a strange screech—threw a most beautiful somerset, and came down on his back, dead—

"His face to the sun, and his feet to the foe."

Joe seemed much pleased with the certainty of his aim, and, looking me full in the face, chuckled out one of his own particular laughs, and shrugging up his shoulders at the same time, as was his practice when pleased. A second made her appearance some time after. She was a beautiful specimen of her kind—a Mrs. Tortoiseshell, belonging, as he said, to his next door neighbour, John Milne, the brewer. She was served out with the same sauce as her friend Tom Black. And Joe, considering

that he had proceeded far enough with the campaign for one day, we adjourned to the back of the Tolbooth to our broth. There was a good deal of stir in Burnett's Close with the guidwives about the sudden and unaccountable deaths of their favourites, but as Joe kept his own secret, the matter dull'd over, for if they had found him out, there is little doubt they would have bestowed such *marks of their approbation*, as would not have been very agreeable for Mr. Joseph Alexander to have carried to the street with him. No man had a greater idea of his own consequence, than had Joseph Alexander; and no man could have given a sharper reproof, or checked any unbecoming liberty taken with him, with more spirit, had the party been the first nobleman in the land; even his select friends, over their gill of toddy, he always kept at a proper respectful distance. He had occasionally a good many droppers into his shop, to hear Joe's remarks on the passing events of the day; and, he was certainly as able as most tradesmen to judge correctly, and give an opinion accordingly; and if some of them were not of that calibre of understanding to comprehend him perfectly, they left the shop with a "well, Joe, you are certainly a droll chap." Joe's vanity was so great, that even this silly remark was not displeasing to him.

He had, also, the weakness to think that he was a general favourite with all the *ladies*, and had

only to make advances to be a successful *lover* in almost any quarter.

It was his vanity directed into a channel certainly a little singular for a man at his time of life, which was the source from which sprang those follies which, in the latter part of his life, betrayed him into acts which a man with far less judgment, but possessing more prudence, would have wisely kept from public observation, and which conferred upon him an unenviable notoriety, and caused the friends of his more prosperous days to withdraw their countenance from him.

From various causes, Joe fell far below that level which he had so long preserved in the community of Aberdeen. His death, though sudden and unlooked for, was nevertheless in perfect keeping with his ruling passion. It was of all days in the year—*on a fast day*, which at former periods, had been looked forward to by him with pleasure, and so often enjoyed with all the zest of a keen sportsman, that poor Joe met his death.

Bleak was the wind, an April sky,  
The morning of a *fast*,  
When Joseph rose, put on his clothes,  
And made a good repast.

And going out to the bay in a boat, along with some very young men, to shoot what chance might throw in their way, the boat was upset, and Joe, with two or three others, was drowned. Poor

Joe rigged in full shooting trim, belts across, filled with powder and shot, had little chance to escape meeting with a watery grave.

His death was noticed by a characteristic poetical article (beginning as quoted above) in the *Aberdeen Chronicle*, a week or two after. And it is now only in the recollection of his friends that any memorial remains of poor Joseph Alexander.

## MR. JACOB BLACKWELL.

JACOB, while sojourning among us in his latter days, exercised the profession of a gingerbread baker, and was generally known to the community at large, by the familiar cognomen of *Lemon-cakie*. Like most military veterans of the old school, Jacob had something of a *clean*, though plain, neatness about his person, with a small, pleasant, ruddy, English-looking face, rather a short nose, and his chin somewhat prominent. He had never been tall enough for a grenadier, but sufficiently so for a smart light-bob. He had been a soldier in his youth, but whether he had ever fought "in famous battles,"—"mounted th' imminent deadly breach," or "faced death in various shapes, both in flood and field," I cannot take upon me to affirm; but true it is and of verity, that after all his marchings and counter-marchings, he at last "forsook the clang of hostile arms;" took to himself a wife, and finally fixed his head quarters in an apartment full ten feet below the level of the Castle Street of Aberdeen. To a man, who, like Jacob, had led a military life the best part of his time, and consequently must have seen somewhat of the *world*, the pitching his tent in such a situation rather argued a



want of *military tact*, but Jacob had sufficient reasons for so doing. This apartment was situated in Pitfoddels' Lodgings, as it was called, where the Bank now stands, and exactly opposite where Jacob mounted guard daily upon his *Flour and Treacle Dépôt*, at the south side of the Cross. The approach to Jacob's subterraneous residence was by a long straight stone-stair, full five feet wide, entering immediately from the street by a wide, low doorway, which also served to throw some light down on the dark abode, for there was none besides but what a small four-paned window, level with the street, could afford; and however singular it might appear, Jacob lived here from my earliest recollection until the house was pulled down in 1800. This apartment I should think, from what I recollect of it, must have been, from the door-way at the street to the fire-place opposite, full forty feet long.

The fire-place was one of those huge appendages which were always to be found in old baronial residences, and which were actually necessary for the culinary department of such large establishments. It must have been full ten feet long, surrounded with a low circular arch, and about four feet wide from back to front, and in Jacob's time, there were snug berths at each end of the fire under this canopy, where we youngsters were stowed away till the pies were ready. The apartment served Jacob for kitchen, for parlour, and hall; and well it might, for allowing for the projection inwards of the stair, it

must have contained an area of about thirty feet square, a pretty fair roomy apartment for a man, his wife, and child. But Jacob contrived, by the judicious arrangement of a "guid bun-bed," and other necessary articles of furniture, to make two apartments out of it. The poor's-house, which was pulled down to make way for the new Court-house, was the last of these baronial town residences in Aberdeen.

There are still three or four houses remaining which mark the style of the architecture which prevailed in the first class of houses of the olden time in the "guid toun;" and these are one in Shiprow opposite the Shore Brae; another at the corner of Broad Street and Huxter Row; one in the Guestrow; and Jamieson's, the *Scotch Rubens*, in the Schoolhill. There are several other stone houses scattered here and there of the second class, one particularly noticeable in Upperkirkgate; and, by taking the wooden houses that existed in our time in Shiprow, Exchequer Row, &c., and some that still remain in Gallowgate, we may form a pretty correct idea of the general style of architecture that prevailed in Aberdeen some two or three hundred years ago.

The ranged Pillar style, familiarly so called, of which we can recollect five or six, are now entirely *defunct*. It is here worthy of remark, that there is no specimen of any building in the ornamental style of architecture come down to us, either in the

town or for miles round, if we except the Cross, part of Bishop Elphinstone's College, and two or three shamefully neglected monuments at the east end of the Auld Town Kirk. As an object of peculiar interest, we must not forget the auld Brig o' Don, with its majestic gothic arch, the effect of which is much heightened from its singularly beautiful and romantic situation. If the monuments alluded to are those of Bishops Elphinstone and Dunbar, who were the greatest benefactors to their country, as private individuals, the northern part of it ever saw, what a lecture of reproach does their mouldering and dilapidated state read to those whose duty as well as gratitude should have pointed out to them the necessity of keeping these memorials of true *greatness* in a proper state of repair ! As far as regards these great men themselves, this ingratitude is as nothing. In their lifetime they reared monuments to their own memory *lasting* as the town itself, or while a history of Scotland shall remain to be read.

But to return to Jacob. Jacob had always a respectable show out upon his stall ; it was covered in all round except in front, and had everything comfortable about it ; his goods consisted of gingerbread in all its variety, but particularly a small round loaf about two inches diameter, ornamented with a few confections on the top of it. This went by the name of a Lemon-cakie, and in the course of time, transferred its name to its *maker*. Besides

these, Lunan-candy, oranges, cracking-nuts, &c. &c., filled up the catalogue of *Jacob's stock*. His goods were all of a superior quality; and he himself was to be found generally outside his stall walking backwards and forwards, in the true, steady, pace, of a sentinel on duty. Jacob was a quiet man and of few words, and waited for a customer with all the patience of an Indian devotee. He was singularly contrasted on Thursday evenings and Friday mornings by his neighbours the Collieston lasses, with their eternal volubility of talk, and their "Come, man, an' buy a bawbee's worth; I'll gie you plenty o' pepper delse, an' a muckle bawbee's worth." The space between Jacob and Willie o' the Wall, was on Fridays, occupied by a decent little woman who dealt in second-hand female apparel. She used to observe, that if she did not get much sale, it helped to *lat the win' in among her duds, and to fley awa moths, and other et ceteras.* . .

As my very old acquaintance, the *mannie* on the top of the Castlegate well, was to be found in his place, or as my old friend *Gibery John*, the hero of Minden, with his round, rosy, laughing face, and his *Timber Toe*, and his basket with his oranges, was to be found either at the Castlehill, or waiting on his young friends, the *collegioners*, at the gateway of Marischal College, so also were Jacob and his brethren to be found every lawful day in their places at the different angles of the Cross. There were only two occasions on which

they were partially disturbed. The one was a public execution, which, to the honour of the "guid toun," seldom occurred; the other, the annual exhibition of the fire-engines belonging to the town, which took place the day before the magistrates' election. Besides giving Mr. John Smith, (of pewter and auctioneering memory), the "fire-engine superintendent" of those days, an opportunity of sporting his full-bottomed wig, his cocked hat, and his portly figure on the top of them, and occasionally drenching some daring young raggamuffin, who might entertain doubts of the efficacy of his waterspout, it ascertained the state the engines were in for use, and also gave our ancient friends, the *Stuart family*, their yearly purification from the filth and dirt which might have accumulated in the various reliefs of the figures, and those of the foliage that surrounds them. John used to manage this matter with a good deal of humour. There was generally a pretty large assemblage, and while seemingly intent upon brushing up the ruff of the beautiful Mary, or scouring the doublet of her son James, if he perceived any of the crowd, from their anxiety, within the range of the engine-pipe, he instantaneously turned the whole power of the pipe upon them, and drenched them effectually, to the exceeding great joy and merriment of the more wily part of the assemblage.

During the winter months, Jacob and his good lady contrived to fill up the length and dulness of

the long evenings, profitably, I have no doubt, in baking a limited number of mutton-pies. They were got up with every attention to cleanliness and neatness of appearance, and it was no uncommon thing, to find in Jacob's quarters, several servant girls of respectable families, with plates and clean white napkins, waiting until the pies were ready. There was no accommodation for consuming the article on the premises, or rather, it was not allowed; but as soon as you got served you was off, up the long stone-stair, with your pie in your hand, at least the youngsters carried no plate with them, and it was therefore a matter that required their utmost care and some management not to burn their fingers, or what was of much more importance, not to *spill* (as a native of Cockaigne would express himself) *the beautiful gravy*, "warm, reeking, rich," in ascending the long stone-stair to gain the street.

Jacob continued doing duty at the depot at the Cross, as long as he was allowed to occupy his (long familiarised) subterraneous dwelling; but after that period he was no longer to be found by his customers at the south side of the Cross, but finally retired, enjoying a well-earned competency until his death.

In this way lived Jacob and his wife for many years. He no doubt had a small pension, with which, and the profit arising from their own industry, they contrived to make the ends meet *comfortably*. They both lived to a good old age, respected, and left behind them, when they died, an honest fame.

## FEEL PETER.

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AMONG the many singular characters with which Aberdeen abounded in the latter end of the last and beginning of this century, there was no one of the number that bore a more marked individuality than did poor Peter Wilson, better known by the name of Feel Peter. Any person of the most common understanding, though he had never heard of Lavater, upon once seeing Peter, would have been at no loss to determine the grade of his intellect. His simple, though somewhat solemn—vacant, but, generally, happy expression of countenance, produced an agreeable sort of sensation on looking at him; even children seemed pleased rather than frightened in his presence. Peter, from his boyhood upwards, appeared in the streets always dressed in the same manner. This dress consisted of a waistcoat close in front, with a petticoat attached to it, reaching down a little below the calves of his legs; a coat or jacket sometimes too big and sometimes too small for him, according as chance threw them in his way. He never wore anything round his neck, and in all seasons and in all weathers he was always to be found bare-headed, bare-legged, and bare-footed; a good deal knock-knee'd, spindle-shanked, and his feet rather turned out, or what is

familiarly called, skew-footed ; and he shot along the streets with a shuffling pack-merchant kind of *trot*. His face was rather long in proportion, with high cheek-bones, a lengthened chin, somewhat emaciated appearance, and of a dark, sallow, weather-beaten complexion, with rather a scanty share of stunted, straight, brown hair on his head ; and when he grew up, his beard was thin, and had a stubbly, scattered, unmanly appearance. He was somewhat under five feet high, always carrying his head rather erect ; and ever and anon throwing a keen skew glance down on his left shoulder, as if he saw something disagreeable there. He was generally armed with a short piece of stick or bone, about six inches long, which served him for several important purposes. Peter magically turned it into either a *musket*, a sword, or a drum-stick, as he found occasion to require it. Peter was certainly a *public character* in his day in Aberdeen, and always made one in all public assemblages. Peter, like his noble brother, Lord Portsmouth, was very fond of *black jobs* ; and he was sure to accompany all funerals that fell in his way, to the churchyard, and if, at the grave side, he could find a vacant shovel, he was sure to give his poor but willing assistance in committing earth to earth and dust to dust. Peter was certainly, to all intents and purposes, what might be called an *amateur grave-digger*, who worked at the profession solely from sheer love of it, in the same manner as his brother of Portsmouth was also an



*amateur* in the undertaking line ; neither of them asked for a reward, but to be allowed to have a hand in the concern was to both a sufficient recompense. Our old friend, Peter Carr, grave-digger of the town's churchyard, rather found Peter troublesome in his fondness for the profession, and also for his wanderings about the churchyard and Drum's Aisle, unobserved, amusing himself in his own manner, according as the whim of the moment dictated to him. It was the practice, for many ages, to ring the bell of St. Nicholas church, every morning at five o'clock, winter and summer, through the whole year. Peter Carr was proceeding to perform this part of his duty one winter morning, carrying a small lantern in his hand. After unlocking the door, as he had just entered Drum's Aisle, a personage stepped up to him from the interior of the aisle, and addressed Peter thus—"Gie me the buitie, Peter ; I'll haud the buitie ; gie me the buitie, Peter."\* Such an unlooked-for salutation, at such a time, and in such a place, must, I should think, have been too much even for the nerves of a grave-digger. Whether Peter Carr, at the moment, considered this *being* as one of those who had lately got a cast of his office, and was come to render him some little service in return, I cannot determine ; but as soon as he had presence of mind to turn the light upon his unwelcome visiter, instead of having to hold converse with an *unearthly being*, to his

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\* Buitie—a small lantern.

agreeable surprise he recognised his old friend and assistant, Feel Peter Wilson. It appeared that Feel Peter had been loitering about the churchyard the afternoon before, and, having been unobserved, he had been locked up in the aisle, unknown to any body, and poor Peter had been obliged to make himself as comfortable as possible, along with the silent members of the ancient family of Drum, through a long, cold, dreary, winter night.

Peter did not consider a journey to the Old Town churchyard as anything out of his way in accompanying a funeral there. On one occasion, Peter had accompanied us there. He, as usual, took up a shovel to give his assistance to the officiating brother of the trade, but, no doubt, feeling himself weary, he threw down the shovel carelessly, and with some force; the shovel unfortunately struck a very choleric gentleman on the shins, and had such an effect as to make the blood almost momentarily appear through his silk stockings. The person stamped—he rubbed his legs, and bit his lips with perfect pain. Poor Peter perceived what he had done, but, instead of betraying any symptoms of sorrow for the consequence, he seemed nowise put out, and looking the person full in the face, with one of his happy grins, exclaimed, “I say, you, did it hurt you? ye sud stan’t out o’ the w’y, you.” It was the solemnity of the occasion alone which preserved their gravity, and prevented the company from bursting out into a horse-laugh,

and the poor sufferer was ashamed to show any other resentment, than by the sternness of his looks, directed to the cause of his sufferings, while Peter giving his usual skew glance to his shoulder, and bringing his bone up to its proper position, moved off to the other side of the grave, grinning, apparently as happy as a prince.

Walter Leith, the town's-drummer, was often honoured with Peter's company the whole length of his round. Peter, with the assistance of his little stick, and the imitative power of his mouth together, used to perform a kind of fugee duet along with Walter and his drum. Walter was by no means proud of this accompaniment of Peter's; he used sometimes to threaten him, adding a flourish of his drumstick to frighten him; but it was of no use, for Peter stotted on after him, and, at the next stop, was ready to strike off a second to Walter's first, always taking the time, as a matter of course, from Mr. Leith. Peter, when in the humour, could give a specimen of the *learned* part of Walter's profession, with the promise of a bawbee, and, after having given a dir-r-roun with his mouth, and a flourish of his stick, *a la* drummer, he proceeded thus:—"Advertees, that, to be sold, ten o'clock, morrow, furntir, blanketts, fenders, wind and weather, and serving," and, after a short pause, "Dir-r-roun. Advertees, ship, sail, morrow, further ticlaes, ply to me. Now, you, gies a bawbee, you."

Peter's manner of conversation was at all times the very soul of *brevity* ; he seemd to possess little or no talent for conversation, beyond what was dictated from the feeling of his immediate want, and which was always expressed in the most pointed and shortest manner possible. He was equally fond of all military parade, but he was not singular in this, as there were two or three others of weak intellect in Aberdeen, at the same time, who seemed to experience the highest gratification from seeing the military. Peter was always to be found alongside the band, always carrying his little stick as a dragoon does his sword. On review days, the firing seemed to give him the greatest of all possible pleasures. He used sometimes to be so wrapped up in his military capacity, as to amuse himself by going through the manual exercise, after his own manner, using his stick for his firelock, and always finishing by levelling it, and firing off, with his mouth, with a *tu-hu* ; then bringing it up to its usual position, and giving his usual glance at his shoulder, to see that all was correct there, he stotted on as gratified as the general himself, on the review day. Peter, as he advanced in years, showed a fondness both for strong liquors and tobacco. He was almost a daily visiter at the houses of those who brewed their own ale, and his general demand there, was to the point at once : no circumlocution with Peter, to create sympathy in his favour ; with him it seemed a right rather than anything else.

"Gie's a drink, mistress," and, after a short pause, "Gie's a piece, mistress;" and, as Peter was looked upon as a daily acquaintance and humble friend, either the one or the other was always given him. He used also to make regular calls at a number of the shops, sometimes just stepping in and taking a look round, as if to see that everything was where it should be, and then stotted out without perhaps opening his mouth; but, in those shops which retailed spirits, he had his regular demands, like a schoolboy churning over his lesson, "Gie's a dram, you; gie's a bit tobacco; gie's a pipe, you;" these he repeated at short intervals between, till he either got something, or till it pleased him to walk away of his own accord; threats seemed to have no effect upon him, for he seemed to possess little or none of the passion of fear in his composition, and his happy, simple look, disarmed every one from using any violence towards him. He was a great favourite with all classes of the community, no doubt, from his singularly grave but happy countenance, from his simplicity, and from a total want of any greedy or mischievous propensity about him. Some years before his death, he took it into his head to break a few panes of glass occasionally, but this seemed to have proceeded more from the pleasure he felt in the act of producing the jingling, rattling sound, from the smashing of the glass, than from any revenge against the party that the windows belonged to.

After stepping about Aberdeen, in this manner, for many years, and, judging from appearance, certainly one of the happiest of God's creatures, Peter came by his death rather unfortunately. It was generally reported, that some one unthinkingly, had given him too much drink, and that, when he had got out into the open air, it had taken such an effect upon him that he had lost his way home, and got quite helpless. But, be that as it may, he was next morning found drowned in the Denburn, in a depth of water so shallow, that if he had been in his usual state, it was believed such a thing could not have happened. Peter, unlike most of his brethren of that grade of society to which he belonged, was an universal favourite, and the news of his death, and particularly the unfortunate manner of it, produced a general expression of sorrow and regret, especially from those who, by Peter's daily calls, made him be considered as a person whom it was necessary to see once a day. By them his death was particularly felt, and it made them experience the force of the observation, that they could have spared, with less regret, the loss of a better man. To the honour of his sister, who was married, and had also a family, Peter was always kept clean, and decent, as far as his habits and natural deficiencies would admit of, till his death.

## MISS ISABELLA GRAY.

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IN a very old house—next to that so long known as a public house, situated in the close in Castle Street known by the name of Jerusalem's, or Stornach's Close, some fifty years ago, in an apartment up a stone-stair entering immediately from the close, sat enthroned old Miss Bessy Gray, schoolmistress.

When I first made my appearance in Bessy's school-room, I was so young as to be carried there, not that I could possibly learn anything, but that I might be in safe keeping. I can just recollect seeing the good old lady sitting in her elbow chair, "with spectacles on nose," hearing her little scholars read their lessons. At this time she had for an assistant, her niece and successor, the well-known Miss Bell Gray, who afterwards kept her school in a parlour in Marischal Street, on the right hand side, near the top, and who, were she now living, would have the pleasure of seeing some of her scholars of that period rank among the most respectable inhabitants of Aberdeen.

Miss Bell, in her most blooming days, had not been of very captivating exterior. She was a woman about the middle size, rather thick built, a very full circumference of face, considerably pitted with

the small-pox, her nostrils distended naturally, or from the practice of taking snuff; her black-round paper snuff-box, along with her *taws*, always lay upon her lap, and her gray piercing eyes, gave a stern severity to the general expression of her otherwise very ordinary features. Her whole appearance, indeed, was well calculated to preserve decorum, and inspire a degree of awe in her little *subjects*. Miss Bell always bore a respectable character as a schoolmistress, and had as scholars all the younger branches of the families of the upper and middling ranks in that quarter of the town. Her school-room was her only apartment, her bed (an old-fashioned tent bedstead) stood along by the back of the door, her chest of drawers in the centre of the back of the room, opposite the windows in front, flanked by a chair or two at each end, and she herself sat enthroned beside the fire-place, at the upper end of the room, in an arm-chair, with a table before, in all the ideal consequence of an eastern monarch—her little subjects sitting indiscriminately on little stools in the area left in the middle of the room. Whether it proceeded from a want of taste, or otherwise, in Miss Bell, I cannot say, but there was neither *sampler* nor print nor ornament of any kind hung against the walls to relieve the primitive plainness of the plasterer's finish; one article alone, but that an indispensable one, the usual nine by twelve *Dutch looking-glass*, so common at this period, graced the wall immediately above her



drawers, to assist Miss Bell in the general arrangement of her *toilet*. A linnet in a cage was her only companion, and held a most important station in Miss Bell's establishment. Like other birds we have known, Little Dickie was endowed with the attribute of omniscience—had a knowledge of events, past, present, and to come, and often saved Miss Bell a world of trouble, in bringing to light high crimes and misdemeanors committed within her jurisdiction. Miss Bell was somewhat particular as to the manners of her scholars ; for, on entering or leaving the school-room, we made our bow or courtesy, with “ Your servant, Ma'am.” She must not, however, have been very particular as to our action suiting the word, in this case, for the *bows* were only a sudden jerk or bob of the head forward, reaching about an angle of twelve degrees from the perpendicular, and the gracefulness of the young ladies' courtesies, was in perfect keeping with that of the bows of the young gentlemen.

Miss Bell was a strict disciplinarian of the old school, and ruled her subjects more upon the principle of fear than that of love. I recollect one particular instance in which she brought a poor criminal to condign punishment, in rather a singular manner. According to the Grayesian code, it was high treason, and punishment accordingly, for any of the scholars to go on the Inches opposite the Weigh-House. On this occasion some boys had remained there so long while the tide was rising, that the as-

sistance of the salmon-fishers and their coble was wanted to land them safe at Poynerhook. Among these boys was ———— Notice of the terrible affair had been previously sent to Marischal Street, and next forenoon poor Sandy was called up before the tribunal of the all-powerful Miss Bell. After a few interrogatories had been put to Sandy, the *Public Prosecutor*, with all the solemnity befitting the occasion, opened her charge against the prisoner, by recounting all the particulars of the transaction, which, as she said, had been communicated to her by her feathered oracle in the cage, the omniscient Master Dickie, to the astonishment of her auditory, and to the almost petrefaction of poor Sandy. In ordinary cases an *alibi* might have been attempted to be proved, but in this case, considering the source from which the information was obtained, such an attempt would have been looked upon as a kind of sacrilege by all present. The evidence being therefore conclusive, sentence was immediately passed upon the prisoner, viz., that he do immediately *strip naked*, and suffer the last punishment in that state. The usual pathetic appeals were made to the court to obtain mercy, but they were of no effect, and poor Sandy suffered accordingly, as an example to evil doers in all time coming.

Miss Bell, as was usual with all the profession at this period, kept her Candlemas in the following manner. On this grand occasion Miss Bell ap-

peared dressed in all her best, her dress possessing all that stiffness which stays and starch could give it, which had long been the fashion prior to this period, and was still partially retained by elderly females on high occasions. About ten o'clock, her little friends began to make their appearance, rigged out in their Sunday clothes, and on entering the school-room, made their usual obeisance, walked up to Miss Bell, presented their gift to her, and took their seats. When she thought that they had all made their appearance, Miss Bell proceeded to distribute her gifts in return. She first, with all becoming dignity, presented every scholar with an orange, and then gave each a small paper parcel, containing confections of several kinds, of the manufacture of her neighbour and worthy friend, Mr. Donald Bain. After allowing us some little time, just to nibble a little at the good things she had given us, she began to prepare for the grand solemnity.

And now had arrived the great and important moment, big with the fate of coronets and of crowns. With what anxiety did the little embryo kings, queens, princes, and princesses, eye Miss Bell as she took from her drawers the portentous emblems of their future greatness! The crown of Miss Bell, which had lain flat in her drawers from that day twelvemonths was made of pasteboard, of the usual shape, and had a sufficient quantity of jewels and gold leaf on it to give it the necessary imposing effect

in the eyes of those whom she delighted to honour. Having turned it over and over, both to add to her own consequence, as well as to get the crown into proper shape, she then, with all the gravity of an Archbishop of Canterbury, proceeded to confer her high honours on her little subjects. She first proceeded to invest with royalty those whose previous gift had entitled them to this honour, by encircling their brows with her pasteboard crown individually, and pronouncing with an audible voice, these mighty and ambition-stirring words, "I crown you King William;" "I crown you Queen Elizabeth," &c., and so on, till she made the requisite number of kings and queens. She then descended to create her princes and princesses of the blood-royal in the same manner, made a few dukes and duchesses to keep their majesties and the royal family in decent company, and wound up the ceremony by not leaving a single commoner in her whole dominion. The great Napoleon was once at the top of the profession in Europe in this line, but I think he came far short of Miss Bell.

The little urchin who is sitting for her picture with her grandmother's cap on, in Sir Joshua Reynolds's picture of the Infant School of Painters, has just the look that each put on as Miss Bell, with the magical assistance of her pasteboard crown, conferred upon us the greatest of all earthly honours. The august ceremony being concluded, the emblem of royalty was again, with all becoming

solemnity, carefully deposited in Miss Bell's drawers. We were then dismissed from the *Presence*, and commanded to make our appearance again in the evening, at six o'clock, to finish this important day, by footing it away on "the light fantastic toe."

A chair placed on Miss Bell's bed formed the orchestra, which was usually filled by the well-known Benjie Anderson, fiddler. This position enabled Benjie to have plenty of elbow room, and also placed him out of the way of the merry little dancers, who kept bobbing about all together till about eight o'clock, when they were sent home to make way for the elder branches of the families and particular neighbours, to enjoy themselves, and the merry dance was kept up until the maiden etiquette of Miss Bell's school rendered it necessary to close the hilarity of the Candlemas evening holiday, by Benjie playing in his best style the well-known musical adieu of

"Guid night, and joy be wi' you a'."

This day, so important in its consequences, and bringing along with its cup of joys, full even to the brim, to the children of my day, is now, I have reason to believe, hardly, if at all, noticed in Aberdeen.

The Candlemas gift was the only money I was entrusted with to give Miss Bell. She was invited to tea at stated periods, and no doubt receiv-

ed the *college fee* at the same time. Miss Bell, like most maiden ladies, had a great volubility of talk, and her privilege as a teacher being added, we may readily suppose there was little pause in the conversation during her visit. She had a wide field, certainly, to exercise her talents on; what, with the wonderful abilities of former scholars, and the talents of those she then had with her, I have no doubt but Miss Bell managed to make her visit agreeable, as far as the *children* were concerned, to those more immediately interested.

As an instance of the power Miss Bell had over her scholars, even when not in her presence, the following will suffice. It may be here premised, that by the statute it was farther enacted to be high treason, and punishable accordingly, to go below the first window of the school-room. There was at this time a general election for members of Parliament. Skene of Skene, and Ferguson of Pitfour, were the candidates. I had just reached the school-room door, when two gentlemen came past, followed by about eight or ten persons, calling "Skene for ever—Pitfour never!" One of them threw a handful of halfpence behind him, when a short distance past me. Some of them reached within a few feet of Miss Bell's prescribed boundary, and remained there, having escaped the notice of those they were intended for. It must be allowed, that money, thus lying on the street, on purpose to be picked up by anybody, and that

money lying within a few feet of a child of five or six years old, was one of the greatest temptations he could well be exposed to, and that there must have been something very strong bearing on his mind that would make him forego taking the advantage of it. Yet, such was the fear of Miss Bell, added to the omniscience of Dickie, that, after many an anxious, lingering look at the money, and several times attempting to screw my courage up to the sticking point, my interest at last gave way to my obedience, and I forced myself round, with an aching heart, and entered the school-room with the usual "Servan', ma'am," while the tears trickled down my cheeks at the grievous disappointment.

Miss Bell had a particular manner of management on days of public executions, which, at the period I refer to, were rather frequent. Her motives were, either that our young feelings might not have a chance of being hurt by seeing anything of the kind, or to prevent any accident in returning in the afternoon, from getting in the crowd. However, we were kept in school all day, from ten o'clock in the morning, until five in the afternoon. I cannot recollect how the victualling department was conducted, but no doubt we were all comfortably provided for.

If the worthy schoolmistress had lived at the present day, when the "schoolmaster is abroad," she would have probably belonged to what is called the Conservative party. At the time of the French

revolution, she often expressed her fears of the dreadful consequences which might arise from the spread of French principles, and she never attempted to conceal her apprehensions of French invasion. On some occasions, when her scholars had collected, she felt herself so much overcome with her fears, that she was unable to proceed with her duties. Miss Bell therefore dismissed the school, after addressing her scholars in nearly the following terms :—" Go home, every one of you, and tell your parents to look after you, for that is more than I can longer promise to do. These are awful times. The country is cursed with Deists and other evil men, who wish to set themselves up against lawful authority. (Davie! what mean ye by picking a hole in the chair cover?) Tell your fathers and mothers to see if they can get some places in the country to send you to, that you may be out of harm's way. The French will be over, and there will be such scenes of burning, and ravishing, and plundering, as the like was never before seen or heard tell of. I wouldna wonder if the Tree of Liberty were planted at the Cross before twelve o'clock the morn. Go all your ways home, and God bless you, for I can teach you nae lesson the nicht."

Miss Bell continued keeping her school for many years, with respectability, but I think she had given it up some time before her death. She was enabled to close her useful career comfortably in the



most honourable of all ways, from the sayings of the fruits of her own industry.

There are a good number living, who, I have no doubt, as the recollection of Miss Bell Gray passes across their memory, think on her with that grateful respect, which her care and attention to their best interests, when children, so well entitle her.

## MR. ALEXANDER SINCLAIR.

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Most true, it speaks the tale  
Of days departed, and its voice recalls  
Hours of delight and hope in the gay tide  
Of life, and many friends now scattered wide  
By many fates.

THE present theatre in Marischal Street is the fourth building that I have known occupied for such a purpose in Aberdeen. The oldest is that house fronting down Shoe Lane, and which, for a number of years, has been attached to the Queen Street Hotel. I recollect, when very young, occasionally going with my juvenile companions to admire the interior of it. At that time it was occupied as a fencing-school; the art being taught by a fine, portly, elderly, Frenchman, of the name of Pepper, who lived and died in Aberdeen. We, children, were allowed to ramble over the auditory part, provided we remained quiet. The scenery, I recollect, and other decorations of the interior of the house, seemed to us as the utmost effort of grandeur and magnificence. There was a kind of an *elbow chair* placed on the second row of benches in the centre of the gallery, which, when I became older, I understood had been erected for the exclusive convenience of Mr. Alexander Sinclair, schoolmaster—

not unfrequently designated *Mad Sinclair*—who, during the performance, like the famous Trunk-maker mentioned in the *Spectator*), had the high dignity and important occupation delegated to him, that of keeping their high mightinesses, the gods, within due bounds, and giving them the signal for their rage, their joys, or their sorrows. When I went to Mr. Sinclair's school, about the year 1785 or 1786, he was then a man bordering upon sixty years of age. He had, when young, been a fine, tall, athletic figure, with a bold, manly, countenance, and still retained a particularly dark expressive eye; however, he then stooped a good deal, was rather bald, and the remaining hair being combed back, formed a small queue, the end of which was generally seen peeping over his left shoulder. Mr. Sinclair had, in his younger days, been an accountant in a large mercantile house in London, and his abilities in that line through a long life, were always acknowledged. Report said that, placing his affections on a young lady, who refused to countenance his addresses, the circumstance had such an effect upon him, that it brought on an aberration of mind, and he was obliged to be confined for some time in a private lunatic asylum, in the neighbourhood of London; but, getting better, he came down to Aberdeen, and, after a while, commenced schoolmaster. He had, however, occasionally, for some time after, temporary returns of his malady; and, in one instance, rather made him-

self somewhat conspicuous—this was by liberating some poor devil of a petty thief, who was undergoing the punishment of being flogged through the town, by rushing in among the *officials*, and cutting the rope that bound the hands and attached the culprit to the hangman, exclaiming at the same time—"Run, you rascal! run, if ever you ran in your life!" The unfortunate transgressor took his advice, showed a pair of clean heels, and fairly escaped. The town-serjeants at this period were always decayed elderly burgesses; some of them, no doubt, very old, and not equal to the task of opposing a powerful athletic, young man, deranged in his mind, and armed with a large clasped knife beside. But, however unwilling the officials might be, they were obliged to return back to the Town-house, and report progress. Mr. Sinclair was ordered to make his appearance before their honours, the Magistrates; he did appear accordingly, and also brought the knife with him, observing, triumphantly, to the Provost, "That's the thing that did it, Sir," holding up a large jock-the-leg, at the same time. It was of no use to argue with a man in his state of mind about defeating the ends of justice, and so he was dismissed, with a kindly admonition not to interfere again. He promised he would not, and he never did.

On one occasion he was incarcerated, but on what account the writer of this is not certain; but, while confined, there was put into prison along

with him, a person who was strongly suspected of concealing his goods for the purpose of defrauding his creditors. Mr. Sinclair having heard the cause of his confinement, and believing the current report, swore that he would raise the devil if he did not at once tell where his goods were concealed; and such was the effect of Mr. Sinclair's ardent eloquence and threats, that the debtor revealed the secret, and the creditors obtained possession of their property.

About the year 1772, the late Mr. John Ewen, enacted the part of Don Carlos, in Young's Tragedy of the Revenge, for the benefit of some charitable institution. At the end of the play he came forward in his shop dress, with apron on, and spoke an epilogue, two lines of which were as follow :—

“ Once more John Ewen, ladies, see before you,  
And in my private character, pray hear my story.”

Mr. Sinclair being in the theatre, of course, remembered these words, and applied them in a pretty apt manner, on a future occasion. Mr. Ewen, it is well known, was remarkable for his politeness and bowing; and, on one occasion, meeting, at the corner of the Narrow Wynd, some ladies to whom he wished to show due respect, he made his low bow; but so low was it, that he was unfortunately prostrated on the pavement. Mr. Sinclair at the moment unfortunately happened to be passing, and seeing Mr. Ewen levelled with his

native dust, immediately exclaimed, quoting Mr. Ewen's words "Once more John Ewen, ladies, see before you." To Mr. Ewen he, at another time, addressed himself, on the links, on seeing that gentleman dressed in the garb of a military man, he having been an officer in a volunteer corps. He said, Mr. Ewen, I will tell you what you are just now thinking, to which the reply was given with his usual suavity of manner, "Well, Mr. Sinclair, I always knew you to be a clever fellow, but you will, I think, find yourself at a loss on the present occasion: what am I thinking?" "Why, that you are one of the greatest men upon earth."

Mr. Sinclair's school-room was situated in a house (since pulled down and rebuilt) on the north side of Netherkirkgate, the flour-mill burn running past the gable of it, under the street. It was exactly opposite the then Dyers'-hall, on the front of which were their arms, and other sculptured devices, which, for the antiquity of those emblems of the trade, and in gratitude to their worthy predecessors, they (the dyers) I hope have still preserved. The entrance to the school-room was in the close, and, by a circular stone-stair, of easy access, you reached the landing. This house must have been of some consequence in its day. Employed in my professional capacity, I have had an opportunity of seeing every style of internal finish and decoration, from the palace downward, but I was never fortunate enough to see any room finished in the

olden style equal to *this* but one, and that was in the official residence of the speaker of the House of Commons. But the beauty of this room is almost hid, from being hung round with the portraits of different speakers for a considerable period back. The school-room must have been nearly thirty feet long, and from the partition where the door was to the windows in front, about eighteen feet; a framed partition on the right hand, divided it from a small room, which was the master's private room.

Mr. Sinclair was one of those few professional men of his day, who possessed the rare qualification of blending the stern severity of the profession with the playful familiarity suitable to the ideas of his young friends, and was always ready to satisfy their curiosity and improve their judgment, by answering any reasonable questions. He every morning, winter and summer, bathed in the sea (placing his clothes on a stick which he carried along with him), no doubt, to prevent and counteract any predisposition of the return of his former malady.

The hours of us who were at the grammar-school were from seven till eight, and from twelve till one o'clock. We always got into the school in the morning, whether the master had returned from his bath and walk or not. Sometimes he was rather late, and on entering the school-room, took off his hat and made a polite bow, wishing us all a good

morning. All men, as well as schoolmasters, have a certain something in their countenance which, to those that know them intimately, denotes that they are either in a good or bad humour, and Mr. Sinclair's little friends, like those of Goldsmith—

“ Had learn'd to trace  
The day's disasters in his morning face.”

If they considered him in a good-natured trim, some one began thus, “ Surely, maister, ye didna bathe this morning ? ” “ Yes, to be sure, I did ; why not ? ” “ Eh, wisna it very cauld, maister ? ” “ Cold, you blockhead, what could make it cold ? I felt no cold ! ” although, perhaps, it was a cold, sharp, spring morning, with a stiff north-wester, sufficient almost to nip one's ears off. At noon, also, we took every opportunity of drawing the good old man into conversation. The bells used to ring on all court holidays, and perhaps they do so still. On these occasions some one began, “ Eh, maister, fat's the bells ringin' for the day ? ” “ The bells ringing to-day ! Oh, let me see. Yes, this is his Majesty's accession to the throne. ” “ Fat's that, maister ? ” “ What, don't you know that, you blockhead ? It is the day on which his present Majesty (God bless him) succeeded his grandfather, George the II. ” And if in the humour, he proceeded in a concise manner to make us acquainted with a few of the leading historical facts connected with the event.



These instances, out of the many, are sufficient to show the good nature and condescension of Mr. Sinclair, among his little friends, and which were so much at variance with the cold, perpetual, sternness, which almost all his brethren thought it necessary to maintain within the walls of their school-rooms. But while Mr. Sinclair was thus kind and communicative, in general, yet, when it was necessary for him to exercise the stern part of his profession, no man in his wrath was more terrible, and he *looked such looks* as if he could have

“Chid the thunder, if at him it roll’d.”

To those who sat at his own desk, or the one immediately in front of him, he, when he saw it necessary, without much previous ceremony, complimented them with a *gentle tap* over the head or shoulder with the black, round, *ebony ruler*, which made them recollect the giver the first hour to come; but to those not within his reach, his threatenings were terrific; his general exclamation was, “Mr. So-and-so, I have been observing you this some time; but if you do cause me to come out over to you, by the ——— I’ll make you remember me the longest day you have to live.” This being pronounced in a very strong loud voice, with a suitable determined look, and accompanied with a flourish of the *ebony*, produced, it may be supposed, silence and diligence for the remainder of that school-time.

For some time, perhaps a year before his death, his day-scholars had dwindled down to four—they were getting stout lads, and he every day more frail. They used to play him a number of little tricks, which, at an after period of life, they felt sincerely sorry for. He used to put on his tea-kettle on what they considered *their fire*, about four o'clock, so that it might be ready for his tea at five, when they left the school. They used frequently to procure water from the mill-burn, and drop it on the fire. "Your kettle's putting out the fire, maister," said one. "Take it off, then, and put it on the hob," was the reply. Just the thing that was wanted, while the water, perhaps, was little more than warm; so when the old gentleman came to make his tea, he found the water perfectly cold, and, to make the matter worse, they had continued cautiously dropping water on the fire, so that it also was almost out at the same time. He never came near the fire to warm himself, and his chair being at the extreme angle from the fireplace, its particular construction gave them an opportunity of playing off the trick without detection. If mention was made of it the next day, the fault was laid on Madge (his occasional servant), who, as he good-naturedly observed, must have filled the kettle too full.

As the scholars furnished their own candles, it sometimes pleased their *high mightinesses* to have only a farthing candle to give them light after dark,

and at another time, perhaps, two of the largest they could procure in Aberdeen. They were ever finding something new to show off their own independence, and in some measure to annoy the old man ; but it was only these four that had got rather beyond his control, for he always retained his authority over the others. It seems, some how or other, a natural propensity in boys, to take advantage either of the weakness or infirmities of age in their teachers. If Mr. Sinclair had ruled like a tyrant, there might have been some excuse for their conduct ; but he was quite the reverse, and it can only be accounted for from a propensity to little mischievous tricks, so natural to boys, and from the increasing infirmity of their master, which had made him unable to punish them. Yet, at an after period of their lives, I had an opportunity of seeing two of them in London, and while they recounted their boyish exploits at Sinclair's, they frankly confessed how grievously they had erred, and how gratifying it would have been to their feelings, had the old man been still alive, to have made every acknowledgment in their power for their *boyish follies*, and to have conferred upon him some mark of gratitude for his care and kindness, as their early friend and respected teacher. Mr. Sinclair began to feel himself unable to take his usual walk after bathing, which was generally round by the Firhill-well and by Berryden, home. He had for some time been troubled with a severe cough, and

a complaint in his lungs. He struggled with his complaint as long as possible, but at last we were told, that the "maister" was confined to his bed, and that there would be no schooling till he got better. True, he did get better, but it was in that place where "the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."

His much and long-esteemed friends, Convener Mackie, and Mr. James Coutts, Wallace-nook, took charge of his affairs, and saw the last duties reverently and respectably paid to the remains of a worthy citizen—a respected teacher—and their much valued and respected friend, Alexander Sinclair.

## JOHN CHISHOLM,

CIVIL ENGINEER.

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A CELEBRATED author has remarked, that literary men are the glory of every country. The renowned warrior makes a bright figure in the page of history, the eminent lawyer may acquire titles to himself and his descendants, and the enterprising and intelligent merchant may leave wealth to his immediate successors, but the man of science and literature, bequeaths a legacy to succeeding generations, which can only be extinguished by the end of time. Wealth may be dissipated, and titles become extinct, but we, at this hour, look upon Homer and Virgil, a Bacon, a Locke, and a Newton, as our familiar friends and common benefactors.

The subject of our present memoir, is Mr. J. CHISHOLM, architect and civil engineer. Mr. Chisholm was a young man of very promising talents, and of uncommon industry; for although he was cut off at the very early age of twenty-nine, yet he left behind him manuscripts and drawings, connected with his profession, which would have done credit to one three times his years, besides which, he was ever actively employed about public works up to the day of his death. He received

the rudiments of his education in that respectable seminary, Gordon's Hospital, after which he served an apprenticeship to a builder in this town, during which period, he spent the full half of the time which many young men spend in sleep, or waste in idleness or dissipation, in improving himself in drawing, and other scientific acquirements connected with the profession of an architect and engineer. At the expiration of his apprenticeship, Mr. C. visited the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and, on his return, he had the spirit and ardour to give in a plan for the two principal streets which are now the ornament of this city, and thereby became a candidate for the prizes offered for the first and second best plans, to be determined by the judgment of the Magistrates and the learned Professors of the University.

Mr. C. was at this time a very obscure individual, and wholly unknown to any of the gentlemen who were to be the judges, and his plan was taken little or no notice of, except by a complimentary note which was sent to him by the then Provost, the late Thomas Leys, Esq. of Glasgow-forest. Mr. C., however, had the gratification of being told by Captain Fiddes\* of the Royal Engineers—a gentleman of acknowledged professional talents—that, in his opinion, his plan had more merit than

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\* See some account of Captain Fiddes in Pryce Gordon's Memoirs, chap. 15, vol. 1., lately published.

any of the others ; and, on a visit to his native city, he had the pleasure to see his plan of Union Street, partly, if not entirely acted upon.\*

At this time, our young and meritorious adventurer, was encouraged by his first patron, the gentleman just mentioned, to seek honour and fame in some other country, urging at the same time the justice of the proverb, that “a prophet has no honour in his own country.”

Accordingly, Mr. C. bade adieu to his native land, and bent his course to London—the mart where abilities of every description generally find their reward. From the powerful letters of recommendation with which Mr. C. was furnished from his friend, Captain Fiddes, in a few days after his arrival in the metropolis, he had offers of a choice of situations, both civil and military. A young man of his correct judgment and sound understanding, was not likely to hesitate long about a choice, he accordingly accepted of an appointment under the celebrated John Rennie, then chief engineer at the West India Docks, where he continued to be employed until their completion, a period of five years.

During this space of time, Mr. C. made the best possible use of the excellent opportunities he then

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\* The original plan of the bridge was three arches, which plan was in so far executed, when it was judged expedient to substitute one entire arch, 130 feet span, which was the plan recommended by Mr. Chisholm.

enjoyed of improving himself in the line of his profession. It is not unfrequently observable, that those who are the most busy and actively employed find more time for study, the relative duties of life, and even for amusement, than those who have little or nothing to employ themselves about; such was the case with Mr. C., although holding a highly responsible situation, and one which required his personal attention from the dawn of morning until dusk, yet such was his persevering industry, that he not only scarcely missed a lecture at the Royal Academy, in their season, but even committed these lectures to writing before he retired to rest, after walking from Somerset House to Blackwall, a distance of five miles.

During Mr. C.'s engagement at these docks, he had frequent opportunities of having intercourse and correspondence with some of the most eminent characters of the time, viz.:—The Right Hon. William Pitt, the late Lord Melville, Admiral Lord Nelson, Earl Stanhope, Sir Sydney Smith, &c. &c., and as he had a large share of natural urbanity, he became a general favourite with all with whom he had any intercourse. Two anecdotes, out of a number which might be mentioned, may be here related, to show his independence and nobleness of spirit.

At this period, the volunteer system was in full operation, and Mr. C. was attached to the Blackwall corps, who were then serving, as were many



other corps, in the country, without pay. Government, however, judged it advisable to make a tender of pay to every corps carrying arms, with, I think, a proviso that those who should not agree to accept it should be disbanded. When these conditions were stated to the Blackwall corps, by their commanding officer, who had previously obtained the consent of all the other officers, Mr. C. stepped out from the ranks, and addressed himself to his comrades in arms to the effect, that he considered it more honourable to serve his country without pay, and that he would never barter his services, humble as they might be, against so much gold. After delivering himself at considerable length on the subject, he received the approbation of his companions by three cheers, to the great mortification of all the officers present, who took an early opportunity of representing him to his employers, and the directors of the Dock Company, as a disaffected person, and one whom they should not keep in their employ. Mr. R. Walker, the local engineer, soon put the matter to rights, by stating to the gentlemen that they were quite mistaken with respect to Mr. C.'s sentiments, for he was sure that there was not a more loyal man in the regiment; and the consequence was, that Mr. C. was offered a commission in the corps.

The other anecdote, illustrative of the independence of Mr. C.'s disposition, is the following:—It was a part of his duty to see that the contractors

executed the work contracted for in a proper manner, and also, to see that the labourers whom they employed, should receive a fair remuneration for their labour, as it had been found out that that frequently ill-used, although friendly-disposed and hard-working people, the Irish, were frequently taken advantage of by the selfishness of the contractors. On one occasion, when the labourers were receiving checks for their pay, a fine stout Irishman presented himself. "Well, Murphy," said Mr. C., "what have you agreed to work for?" "God bless your honour, sir, I am to have 2s. per day." "Who engaged you for that, Murphy?" "Bless your honour, sir, it was the contractor." "Ay, Murphy, but the directors of these works don't want a fine stout fellow like you to work his heart's blood out for 2s. a-day; here is a ticket for 3s. 6d., and come again and inform me if you have been paid that amount."

The poor fellow went away with his eyes swimming in tears, and his heart so full of gratitude that it stifled utterance. In a short time, however, he returned with a pot of porter in each hand, and, addressing himself to Mr. C., "God bless your honour, sir, and sure you are a gentleman, and you must do me the honour to drink with me."

The only thing of any magnitude which Mr. C. had an opportunity of designing at these stupendous works, was the Western Entrance to the East India Docks; it consists of a pediment with a prin-

cipal entrance gate and two side ones, over which is a large committee-room or hall, lighted from the roof, by three small cupolas, in uniformity with the gates, the whole terminating with a rotunda, in which is placed a clock.

During his residence at Blackwall, Mr. C. executed a number of designs for gentlemen's houses and villas, in different parts of the country, besides which he furnished annually for the exhibition of the Royal Academy, two or three designs for public buildings; one of which was for a House of Commons, one for Public Rooms at Aberdeen, and one for a National Gallery.

Naval architecture was also a branch of his studies, for which, his vicinity to the river and the dock-yards, gave him many advantages. He constructed a frigate with four masts, and a line-of-battle ship to carry 110 guns, on two decks, drawings of which were exhibited in Somerset House, and which brought him acquainted with several scientific gentlemen of the navy,

At this period, the end of the year 1807, Mr. C. left his residence at Blackwall, and took up his quarters at the Salopian Coffee-house, Charing-cross, along with his highly respectable and much esteemed friend, Mr. Telford, by whom he was engaged to complete a set of designs for a new Court-house, for the county of Cumberland, which, with other improvements, he went down to Carlisle to superintend the execution of, and, after a

short residence of only nine months in that city, and when he had just laid the foundation of fortune and fame, in the morning of life, and in the tide of prosperity, he was carried off by a sudden and unexpected death. Mr. Chisholm's death was recorded in the Carlisle Journal in the following terms, which, considering that he was almost a stranger among strangers, did equal credit to the memory of the deceased, and to the feelings of those who survived him:—"On Wednesday, the 10th November, 1808, died in this city, Mr. Chisholm, architect, aged twenty-eight. It is with the most heartfelt regret that we record the unexpected death of this useful and worthy member of society. Mr. Chisholm was a native of Aberdeen, in the university of which he received the elements of physical and moral science, on which his professional studies were grounded. The activity of his mind was shown in the great progress which he made in architecture, engineering, and those parts of natural philosophy connected with them. But while he was studious to advance himself in his profession, he did not neglect those ornamental studies which qualify a man to take a part in elegant and polite conversation. His taste was improved by reading the best poets of ancient and modern times, and he had formed a style of writing which evinced a brilliant fancy and a poetical imagination. Mr. C., till a short time previous to his death, enjoyed good health, and was ever active in promoting and su-

perintending the works on which he was employed. It has too often been our lot to lament the aspiring of genius cut short by the hand of death, and to mourn for the vacuum it leaves behind; but never could regret or lamentation be more feelingly bestowed, than on the subject of this short memorial. From the union of moral excellence and ingenuity in his profession, from the amenity of his manners, and from the justness of his observations, he had conciliated universal esteem, admiration and respect, and never did the grave close upon a man more useful, nor more entitled to the esteem and reverence of his survivors. The deceased died in consequence of the bursting of an artery near the heart."

ROBERT MORISON,  
BAKER.

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SOME fifty or sixty years ago, on a waste angular piece of ground, between the last house in Lodge-walk and the entry to the then butchers' selling-market (now part of the poultry market), stood a house of very small dimensions. Its height inside walls might be six feet, its front or gable-end, towards Queen Street, about ten feet, in which there was a door-window and fire-place, and its length running backward about fourteen feet. At the further end was built a small oven, occupying nearly half the length of the premises. There was also an attachment or *tee-fa'* against one of the side walls, the length of the oven, and about four feet wider. This was formed of clap boards, and gave an additional apartment to the premises. From its general appearance, the little building might have been called a *cottage* with greater propriety than any thing else.

In this abode there was to be found every law-ful day, an *individual* who was almost universally known to the youngsters of Aberdeen, but particularly to those, who, from a visit of a country friend to town, or some other wind-fall, could oc-

casionally command a few pence in their pockets ; and this worthy, whose name, occupation, and abode was so notorious, was no less a personage than Mr. Robert Morison, pieman in Aberdeen. Robert was a fine, portly, and rather a good-looking man, dressed as master baker ; when at work, generally wore, viz. :—a nice white apron, red night-cap, and shirt-sleeves turned up. He was a Trades' Burgess of Aberdeen, and had, at a former period, carried on the baking business in the usual way, but had then given up the selling of sixpenny bricks, puffy buns, sweetiewigs, and souters' clods,\* and taken himself to the less dignified (but no doubt), more profitable line of vending mutton-pies, apple-tarts, and parched pease. Robert's articles were not got up with that general neatness of appearance which *those* of his then only cotemporary, Jacob Blackwell's were, but as a counterpoise to this, Robert's premises afforded accommodation to eat your pies there, and I can well remember the pleasure I have enjoyed, and with what a light step I have run down Lodge-walk to procure one of them. Robert had three different priced articles, on purpose to meet the wishes, or rather, more properly, the pockets of his customers, viz., twopenny, penny, and bawbee pies and tarts. The accommodation

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\* These three last-mentioned articles were small bread—not known now, perhaps, in Aberdeen ; but at the period alluded to, could be had in any baker's shop in the town.

which Robert's pie-office afforded was certainly very homely, but in this particular there was also a better and a worse, for the small *tee-fa'* before mentioned formed a small apartment, which Robert very properly dignified with the name of *his parlour* or *snugry*, and into which those boys, who were rather more genteelly dressed were ushered in, and had the honour of a sitting to eat their pies.

Robert's snugry had nothing of the decorative style in its finish, to grace or to set it off, for the boards were just in the same state (to speak professionally) as they *came off the saw*, without even so much as a daub of yellow ochre or spanish brown to give the apartment a bit of an air of shabby-gentility in the eyes of its occasional inmates. A board, the length of, and against the back of the oven, formed the seat, and another in front answered all the purposes of a table. Its door was in perfect keeping with the finish of the interior, being neither more nor less than a piece of cloth, stretched upon a line, hanging down to cover the aperture which separated it from the shop. Yet in this humble apartment, I have known one or two embryo Sheriff-Substitutes of counties—one or two M.D.'s and D.D.'s enjoy themselves, and I have no doubt but those gentlemen will candidly confess that they enjoyed as much, if not more pleasure, over their pies in Robert's snugry, than they have done in the after period of their lives, however sumptuous



the banquet, or however high sounding the names of the parties present at it might be. When an order was given for another pie, it was always accompanied with a positive injunction of, "*pet plenty o' gravy in't, Robert.*" The gravy was a great desideratum with Robert's customers, and it certainly added much to the flavour of the article. It consisted, I believe, of the mutton bones, stewed down, and a *quantum suff* of black pepper being added, to give it the necessary relish and effect. Robert kept his gravy inside his oven, for the purpose of keeping it always hot, and the utensil he used for this purpose was a good brown *belhelvie*, a coarse manufacture of stoneware, greatly famed in Aberdeenshire at that period for standing the fire well, and out of which, with the assistance of a *milk-pot*, Robert was enabled (the pies being served up in a common tea-saucer), to gratify the wishes of his little customers—*pet plenty o' gravy in't*—without running any risk of spilling this precious commodity. At the period alluded to, flour and mutton were comparatively cheap, and the boy who could manage to get through with two penny pies, and finish with an apple-tart, by way of a dessert, stood in no great need of his supper that night, and it required some finesse to manage the matter at home, to account for his very unusual want of appetite for his pottage. An assignation of two or three favourite classmates, to meet at Robert Morison's in the evening, was to them a matter of the

highest importance. For there, perhaps, for the first time in their lives, they experienced a *mannikin* kind of pleasure, in being able to pay for and command attention in a public place of entertainment ; it was as it were (however homely), the first essay of the *boy* rehearsing that part, which, at no distant period, he would have to perform in the *after-piece of the man*, and which carried along with it a pleasure, arising out of the idea, which at the time he had no conception of himself. As for the other article Robert dealt in, viz., the parched pease, they also were got up somewhat savoury, by having the addition of some mutton suet strewed over them while doing in the oven. Robert's principal customers in this way were, he said, the country folks, on the Thursday evenings and Friday mornings. Robert certainly did not go all the length in praise of his pease, which the well-known *Will Boniface*, of the town of Lichfield, went in *that* of his ale ; for, according to his own account, he had lived on his ale, drunk his ale, and slept upon his ale, for so many years, and had not tasted as many ounces of meat during the same period. No, no, Robert did not go this length in regard to his pease ; it would have been of no use if he had, for it was pretty evident, from the jolly rotundity of Robert's person, that he lived on something more substantial than parched pease and cold water ; but notwithstanding this, Robert was very eloquent, nay, even learned, on the great medicinal qualities of

his pease; he maintained that they were a grand and never-failing specific for almost all disorders to which flesh is heir to. Puffing was not so scientifically got up in Robert's day as it is at the present, or else *Morison's Pease* might have rivalled the far-famed Morison's Pills of the present day, and Robert might have finished his days, wallowing in wealth; but Robert was a *modest man*—that *bann* which unfortunately but too often accompanies superior abilities, and which too frequently leaves its possessor to struggle through life, surrounded by poverty, and borne down with difficulties, while he beholds with bitter sorrow, the bold, forward, presumptuous blockhead make a dash and gain a fortune.

Robert Morison, although thus filling a comparatively humble station among his fellow citizens, was considered a shrewd, sensible man. I have understood that he was the author of a small tract, published at Aberdeen, the subject of which I have no means at present of ascertaining.

He was also some time town's drummer, prior, of course, to the period of our very old friend, Walter Leith, holding that situation. Robert was also a very great politician, and the American war of independence being at the time carrying on, furnished Robert and a Mr. Shillas\* (once a mer-

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\* Shillas, although a well educated man, was very much reduced in circumstances previous to his death, so much so, that he became a

chant in Aberdeen), with matter of debate for hours every other evening. They certainly carried on their debates with much warmth, so much so, that we youngsters often thought that nothing less than a battle-royal between the belligerents, Robert and Shillas, would have been the consequence.

Robert Morison, like most other individuals with whom the boys came in contact, fell in for his share of occasional annoyance from them.

There was one very short sentence, which, to have repeated in Robert's hearing, would have subjected the delinquent to a not very ceremonious ejection, neck and crop, into the street, and this very short sentence was, "*the back o' your wig's afore Robert.*" I never understood what these words alluded to, but we were perfectly aware that it was high treason to have uttered them in Robert's hearing; however, when once out of doors, we but too often indulged our mischievous propensities in repeating them, accompanied also with a few stones thrown against the roof of the building. Since Robert's death, there has been several persons attempting this line in Aberdeen; but from whatever cause, neither of them established themselves,

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mason's labourer, and while he was in that capacity, I recollect him being employed by Colonel Finlason's Volunteers to represent a grievance, of which they complained, at the Horse Guards, and Shillas received a polite reply from the Duke of York, and the grievance was consequently redressed.

or gained that standing among their fellow-citizens that Robert Morison did.

This little temple of boyish joys and independence in which Robert presided as high-priest, with so much credit to himself, and satisfaction to his little devotees, was soon after his death converted into a tinsmith's shop.

" To what vile uses may we come *at last* !"  
" The immortal Cæsar dead, and turn'd to clay,  
May stop a hole to keep the wind away !"

In passing up and down the street afterwards, I could not help contrasting the loud jocund hearty laugh of the merry schoolboy, with the sharp, monotonous, and almost never-ending clank of the tinsmith's hammer, and that the not very odoriferous effluvia of white solder and ground rosin now superseded the sweet smelling savour of the mutton-pies and apple-tarts of Robert Morison.

## MRS. THOMSON AND FAMILY.

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Who among those that can number fifty or sixty summers having gone over their heads, and who have been born and brought up in Aberdeen, but recollects a small bookseller and stationer's shop situated at the top of the *then* Narrow-wynd (now forming the line of Union Street), opposite the Plainstones? This little shop had nothing of the decorative style in its exterior, either to recommend or attract notice. None of your large windows, either straight or circular, were thought necessary in those days to carry on the business of *this little shop*, yet notwithstanding the unassuming appearance of its exterior, I will venture to affirm, that among all the booksellers' shops in Aberdeen, there was not one among the number so universally known to the youngsters *there*, either high or low, rich or poor, as was the *little shopie aside the Plainstones*. Who, also, among the said class, but recollects the smart, active, cheerful, little lady, who generally was to be found behind the counter in the said shop, as the acting manager of that department, Miss Christian Thomson. When I first knew this most worthy family—and that was

as soon as I could (by myself) toddle across from the one side of Huckster Row to the other, Mrs. Thomson's family door being in that street—it consisted of Mrs. Thomson, her son James, and Misses Christian and Agnes, her daughters. Mr. Thomson, senior, I never recollect to have seen, being, I suppose, dead before I became a daily visiter to this kind-hearted family. This little shop should have been designated by some of these or such like high sounding names, which establishments of this sort adopt at the present day, as *The Royal Juvenile Depôt and Library* ; *The Victoria Emporium for children's cheap books, &c. &c.* ; for it was here where every youngster hurried to procure the favourite work which he had long wished to be in his own possession. The shop had but one window, and that certainly for a shop was very small, and it was almost always literally covered, from head to foot, with the favourite schoolboy authors of the day. Occasionally the lower panes were filled with those well-known coarse, yet attractive prints of their day, such as *The Farm-yard on fire*, *The Mad Bull*, *Haymaking*, *Harvest Home*, &c. &c. Price twopence coloured, one penny plain. Printed and sold by Carrington and Bowles, 45, St. Paul's Churchyard. The prints of these homely subjects (which were but coarsely executed in comparison to the state of the *art* at the present day), were, I have understood, to be found all over Europe and the European part of America, and

from the profits arising from their extensive sale, the children of the *firm* now live independent.

There was one of these prints (*until lately*) pasted against the wall of the tap-room of a small old fashioned, long-established public house, at the bottom of Stamford Hill, in the neighbourhood of London, but modern improvement has now also swept away this homely, yet respected, relict of my juvenile recollections. When these prints were not in the window, their place was occupied by those esteemed works, *The History of the Holy Bible*; *King Pipin*; *The Death of Cock Robin*; &c. &c., *with cuts, and bound in gilt*, price one penny; and above them were the larger volumes of *The History of Lothian Tom*; *Wise Willie and Witty Eppy*; *The Sayings, Doings, and Witty Jests of George Buchanan*; *Sir William Wallace*, &c. &c.; and in the poetical department was to be found *Chevy Chase*; *The Cherry and the Slae*; *Sir James the Rose*; *The Domine Deposed*; *Ajax's Speech to the Grecian Knabs*, &c. &c.

When we went to the shop to make a purchase, (the money being in our hand) we stepped boldly in. "Well, my laddie," said Miss Kirsty, "fat i'st that ye want?" "O, I want *Lothian Tom*," or any other, as the case might be. "Is't i' the window?" was the quick reply. "O, ay, it's up there." "Just gang out than, my laddie, and chap wi' your finger on the window anent it, and I'll tak it down to ye." This ceremony was readily and



soon performed, and the long wished-for work was forthwith delivered into our hand by Miss Kirsty.

It may be easily supposed that it was not every trifling occurrence on the street which prevented us from hurrying home to run over the contents of our newly-acquired addition to our *library*. Miss Christian Thomson seemed as if nature intended her to have filled this or a similar situation in life. She was possessed of a strong masculine mind, which she had improved by much reading. She was allowed by those gentlemen, who professionally frequented the shop, to be no trifling adversary in a debate on most general subjects of the day. Miss Kirsty had, unfortunately, in her younger days received an injury in the spine, and the usual consequences followed as to her personal appearance; but her ready wit, her smart repartee, joined to her general information, was far more than enough to counterbalance her want of personal attractions, and she passed through life sincerely esteemed and respected by all who enjoyed the pleasure of her acquaintance.

While the stationery department was thus managed by Miss Kirsty, that of the binding was superintended by her brother, Mr. James Thomson. The binding shop was but a small apartment, with one window looking over to the Council-Chamber door; yet small as this apartment was, I have seen in it, besides Mr. Thomson and his two apprentices, half a dozen of the neighbours' children, all

stowed away in it, some in one corner some in another. The shaving tub was the favourite place, and they considered themselves fortunate who came first and took possession. It was a matter of surprise to the neighbours, how Mrs. Thomson's family could put up with the nuisance of so many children perpetually running out and in to their house at their pleasure. Yet so it was, and so it had been, from the oldest to the youngest of seventeen children belonging to three neighbouring families, each in their turn, had all past on to man and womanhood. All of them had enjoyed the same indulgence, and all considered themselves at home while they were there. The street door was almost always kept shut. It had a long-tailed old fashioned knocker gracing the center of the upper part of it, but we children used no knocker, in fact several of us could not reach it, and besides, it would have been work enough for one person to have attended on the door; but to remedy this, and to give every facility to their little visitors to come and go at their pleasure, a very simple but effectual plan was adopted. This was a hole bored through the door, above the latch, inside, and a string being attached to it to hang down outside, we easily let ourselves in, without giving any trouble to the family. There were only two *standing orders of the house*, the one, *to be sure to shut the door behind you in going out or coming in*, the other was, *to be sure and deight your feet well on the*

*bass*. If any of the children was amissing, the first inquiry after them was made at Mrs. Thomson's, and if any apology was offered for the trouble the children gave them, the reply was always to the same effect, viz., "Tell Mrs. ——— that we are ae glad to see them, poor things, we would think oursels out o' the warld athegether, if they werena running out and in as usual." It was the binding shop, however, that was the great center of attraction to us children, for Mr. James was a most useful auxiliary to us in all our little amusements. He could furnish us with paint, red, black, or yellow, to adorn and beautify the upper surface of a new *tap*. He could accommodate us with a piece of twine to tie on our new points on our *fummel sticks*. He could also, upon the promise of good behaviour, oblige us with a superior sort, to be a string to our peer (spinning top), and if the important affair of a dragon (paper kite), was on the tapis, his judgment was appealed to, to determine its size and shape, and as was anticipated, the necessary material of paper and twine was also furnished by him. In fact, he seemed to enter into all our little enjoyments as one of ourselves, and I really think this worthy man felt little less pleasure in accommodating us, than his little friends did in receiving his favours. Nothing of any importance could be gone about without consulting Mr. Thomson, and to do Mr. Thomson justice, he seemed to enter into the merits of the cases brought before

him, with all the zeal of a *ten-year-auld*. About the period when the last section of these seventeen children were enjoying themselves in Mrs. Thomson's, two of the families retired from business and went to reside at a different part of the town, and in consequence of this change, the individual who writes this, being the youngest of the whole seventeen, became the last, and generally the only one of the once numerous group of little visiters who had for years congregated so happily together under the roof of the good and kind Mrs. Thomson.

About this period also, the binding shop was removed to the apartment immediately above the old one on the first floor, and it was converted into a small shop, unconnected with the house, and its former window turned into a door to the street. I will here take the liberty of adding, that its first tenant opened it in the stoneware line. It was certainly a very small place, but large enough, at the time, perhaps, for the means of its possessor, but this individual, I am glad to say, has, by his unwearied industry, his strict integrity, and unassuming manners, long since ranked among his fellow citizens, as being at the top of his profession in the line in Aberdeen, and I feel gratified in adding, his name is Mr. George Mearns, Union Street. The removal of the binding shop up stairs, however, made no difference to Mr. Thomson's little friends, up stairs or down stairs where he was, there were

they also, yet this running up and down stairs, of a parcel of children, which to almost all other families would have been considered an intolerable nuisance, was never known to give rise to any complaint, or in the least to be looked on as any inconvenience, by Mrs. Thomson's family. The binding shop being now up stairs, and the family generally down stairs, tended towards causing Mr. Thomson to be a good deal more secluded than formerly, and having few personal visiters calling upon him, he, from necessity, became more familiar in his general bearing towards his two apprentices than he otherwise perhaps would have been. He had been in London some time working as a book-binder, but how long or short is of little consequence, but that it was at the period when Lord George Gordon's riots (1780) occurred, I had frequent opportunities of not easily forgetting.

This was his favourite topic, when disposed to be loquacious. Like all others of the sons and daughters of Adam, Mr. James had his weak points, and in his often recitals of this unfortunate occurrence, he leaned rather a little too much to the Baron Munchausen school, as far as regarded the part which he had acted on that important occasion. His two *subs* were now getting towards manhood, and could form a pretty correct judgment on things generally. They sometimes, therefore, delicately hinted at the probability of some parts of Mr. James's narrative. Mr. James on these occasions

immediately put on the master, observing, "*O ! very well, you was there and I was not,*" and a dead silence was the consequence. Mr. James being naturally somewhat loquacious, and also from his kindly disposition, felt more uneasy under this state of things than his two subs did, for they, from experience, could pretty well guess what would be the issue. If the silence had continued until I made my appearance in the evening, he soon got into his usual talkative humour, and after rounding the subject a little, that *they* had all been very busy at their work during the afternoon, he proposed, as a little relaxation, to have a game at cards for an hour or so. This was foreseen by his wily subs, and of course agreed to, and I was commanded "*to stand to my exercise.*" This standing to my exercise was to get up into the left-hand side of the shaving tub, and to put a leaf of pasteboard against the windows to prevent John Holme or any of his auxiliaries, the *gemmen in red*, from overlooking us from the Council Chamber window opposite; for, at this period, there were very frequently meetings of Council held in the evenings, and also no little feasting in the Town-Hall took place at that period.

We always played partners; Mr. James and his little friend on one side, and his two subs being the other. Mr. James sat in his usual place, fronting the window, and I was opposite him, in the end of the shaving tub, and his two subs, drawing

up one on each side of him, placed us therefore correctly. Our game was the good old one of catch the ten. The amount we were to play for (which was always to be spent in pies and ale), was strictly determined upon, before we began to play, as well as other punctilios belonging to the game. But this was done by the subs, as a matter of compliment indirectly paid to Mr. James; for they well knew that whoever lost or won, there would be but one *paymaster*, viz. Mr. Thomson. In fact, it was as a peace-offering made by Mr. James to his subs, that things might again go on harmoniously as usual. I was sometimes subjected to a very severe lecture for my carelessness in play, and thereby causing our side to lose the game; but whether it was my fault, or that of my partner, Mr. James, it was all one, for it would have been contrary to all the rules of sound policy to have ascribed our losing the game to the effects of the bad play of Mr. Thomson, and in the censure thus bestowed upon me by my partner, Mr. James, for bad play, it was sure to lose nothing by the two subs endeavouring to exaggerate it as much as possible, whether real or imaginary. It was necessary that this harmless recreation should be conducted with as little noise as possible. Mr. Thomson always paid the most marked deference and respect to his mother, and she, being of rather a serious and religious turn of mind, this game at cards would, no doubt, have been displeasing to

her, had she known of it; it was therefore necessary to keep a sharp ear on the movements below stairs; and upon our hearing a footstep on the stair, no *conjuror* with his *presto begone*, could have managed the instantaneous disappearance of the cards better than we could, if necessary, as well as the immediate taking up of the usual position by the two subs.

The game being over, I, as head commissary for the victualling department, received my instructions along with the needful, to procure and convey the required supplies to head-quarters. Being a privileged individual, my goings out or coming in was not taken notice of by the worthy family below; but there was some risk, and means were taken accordingly, to prevent the agreeable exhalations proceeding from Jacob Blackwell's pies reaching the olfactory nerves of the ladies in the parlour, in passing from the street door up stairs to the binding-shop. This harmless game at cards might perhaps, by the more rigidly righteous part of the community, be considered a little deviation from the strict line of propriety in Mr. Thomson; but all things considered, even this indulgence "*lean'd to virtue's side*," for Mr. Thomson had very few out-of-door acquaintances, and never left home until after business hours (eight o'clock), when he regularly adjourned, every evening, to have his bottle of home-brewed ale at a neighbouring public-house, and to enjoy a little rational con-



versation with two or three individuals who, like himself, regularly came there. It was no great wonder, then, that Mr. James being thus secluded, was somewhat fond of these occasional games at cards, but he never allowed this enjoyment to interfere with business, and no doubt considered also that there was nothing lost in the long-run, by proposing and joining in these occasional short relaxations with his two subs. There was rather a singular book, or portfolio, kept in the binding-shop. This book was bound with a back in the usual way, very thick, and had two large pasteboards for its covers; its length was that of the largest sheet of paper, but the leaves of it were only about two inches wide.

On these leaves were pasted all the flying scraps of the day, play-bills, dying speeches, advertisements, slips cut out from newspapers, anything and everything; ballads, both doleful ditties and sprightly ones; together with all the then penny and halfpenny publications, upon any and all subjects, either prose or verse, that came in the way—all were secured between the pasteboards of this singular *book*. It was certainly a *literary curiosity* of its kind; and if it is still in existence, as I have reason to believe that it is in the possession of a most respectable family in Aberdeen, it would, at the present day, be considered of no little value by the collectors of old or curious books. This book and I were well acquainted; for it was Mr. James's

pleasure sometimes that I should read for their amusement.

In this case, there was I sitting on the shaving-tub, with this large tome spread out on my knees, when, opening it anywhere, and running over the contents, I read what Mr. James thought proper. I was often tired of my large book acquaintance, but I always read on until I received orders to stop.

While Mr. Thomson thus treated me with every kindness and indulgence, I cannot (though at this distant period) think but with sorrow, that I became the tool to his two subs in playing Mr. Thomson a very mischievous trick. He (Mr. Thomson) was very near-sighted, and therefore required his light to be very close up to him, particularly when gilding; my position being up in the corner of the shaving-tub, I consequently fronted him. He almost always wore a red nightcap when at work, and a toupee tie-wig when dressed. When gilding, he required to lean forward a good deal, to give the necessary pressure, to fix the gilding on the book. My cue, therefore (in this mischievous affair), was to near his candle by slow degrees towards him, and the consequence was, that the worsted tassel which graced the top of Mr. James's red night-cap very frequently suffered a good deal in its gentility from this process. The singeing of his red nightcap (though not altogether agreeable) did not cause him much uneasiness.

But a more serious matter than the curtailing the amplitude of the ornament of the red night-cap was suggested one evening, and carried into effect. The job which Mr. James was engaged on, was in a great hurry. Upon being called on to come down to tea (there being some visiters below) he shifted his red night-cap for his toupee and tie-wig. It immediately occurred to his two subs if, when he came up stairs again, and, in his hurry, neglect to exchange his head-gear, that the ceremony of the *cap and candle* should be gone through upon Mr. James's dress toupee and tie-wig. Their anticipations were unfortunately realized. The same process of carefully nearing the candle produced the same effects upon the most conspicuous part (*viz.* the front toupee) of Mr James's wig, as that on the tassel of his red night-cap.

This misfortune to his wig he seemed to feel keenly, while his two subs could hardly restrain their merriment within due bounds, and, at the same time pretending to condole with their master on this untoward event, while the little unfortunate wight who was the principal in this affair, trembled for fear at his own temerity.

As no person who had the least claim to any respectability among his fellow-citizens could possibly appear publicly with a singed wig on, this injury to the frizzled and most conspicuous part of the dress-wig of Mr. Thomson was rather a serious matter. That *wigs* may be as generally worn at

the present day as they were at this period, may be the case; but they do not constitute that particular distinguishing article in the appearance of the outward man than they did fifty or sixty years ago. If you wished another to recognise a person but partially known to him—he wears a wig, said you, of such and such a kind, as a bob-wig, a tie-wig, a scratch wig, a full bottomed-wig, a black wig, a brown wig, a gray wig, a flaxen wig, a powdered wig, &c., as a distinguishing mark of the person in question. The wigs of those days were all of a formal cut, having in their appearance, what with their frizzling, curling, powdering &c., anything but an imitation of nature's work. It was evident, therefore, that from this misfortune Mr. Thompson could neither go to kirk nor market with a singed wig on. He might indeed have ventured out to the street wearing this mishap about with him, as perhaps he might not be called upon from politeness, to take off his hat; but it would have been the height of folly in such a man as our worthy old friend Provost Cruden to have attempted it. The good man had, when he went to the street, so many calls on his politeness, that it was essentially necessary that his wig should be everything that a wig should be, in all its points and bearings, whether in front, in its rear, or from its different angles; for, among all our citizens belonging to the old school in Aberdeen, there was no one among the number so liberal of his *bows*, so

also there was no one of the number who made his bow with half the dignity and grace as the worthy Provost did. It was really quite a treat to see the worthy old man returning the salutes of even the most ordinary dressed individuals, bringing up his hand and taking hold of his smart three-cocked hat by the front corner, between his three fingers and thumb, lifting it a few inches up from his head, and then letting it down gracefully and slowly to the given level, his jolly good-natured countenance at the same time wearing a most gracious smile. Take it as a whole, the Provost's bow would have done honour to an emperor or a general saluting a commander of a battalion on passing him on a review day.

Now there was only two ways in which Mr. Thomson could get over this mishap to his wig ; one was, to get a new wig (rather an expensive remedy), the other to submit the singed wig to the skill of his professional *man of business* in the wig way, viz. Mr. Alexander Simpson, or, as he designated himself when he gave his address (he had a lisp), " Misher Asha Sheempson, barba, north side o' the Castlegate, next door to Hoggie Geordie's ;" and there is no doubt but Misher Asha Sheempson in due time enabled Mr Thomson to make his appearance in a respectable manner, either at kirk or market, as usual.

While this worthy family did everything in their power to contribute to the happiness of their little

friends and to their neighbours generally, they were also bright examples to those around them, in the performance of those relative duties which adorn the life of true Christians.

They were ever ready to stretch out their hands to those who had none to help, and the poor unfortunate individuals who were criminally confined in these noxious holes in the Tolbooth were occasionally supplied by them with plain but wholesome food; and in every case of distress which came within their knowledge, their assistance was always ready. They have all, years since, gone the way of all flesh, but to the few now living who have cause more particularly to remember them, this worthy family, while memory remains, will be recollected by them with reverence and respect.

The Thomson family was famous for possessing a beautiful and peculiarly small species of those spaniels generally known as King Charles's breed. They were remarkable for the inside of the mouth being black. In my childish days, they had two females named Fanny and Sally, and yelping little curs they were. They generally had an ear on the door, and on any of the little customers making their appearance, they came running at them, yelping with all the apparent fierceness of little tigers; but it was all noise with them.

At an after period when I went down to Aberdeen on a visit, I had, along with my mother, the extreme pleasure of drinking tea with the kind

friends of my childish days, the *two* Miss Thomsons, then retired from business.

I had, at the same time, the honour (if I may be allowed the expression) of receiving a puppy from them, of the species alluded to, Miss Kirsty feelingly observing, that “the bit doggie would be a kind of keepsake and remembrancer of auld langsyne, when perhaps she and her sister had *baith* worn awa.”

## JOHN EWEN,

JEWELLER.

JOHN EWEN, Jeweller, was one of those very few individuals who, from indefatigable industry, raised himself from the humblest walks of life, not only to ease and comfort, but to comparative affluence. He did more: while he was improving his circumstances by every laudable and honourable means, he at the same time did not neglect to cultivate his mind by application and study; and, being gifted by nature with talents far above mediocrity, although he had reached manhood before he saw the necessity of acquiring knowledge to qualify himself for the enjoyment of good society, yet he attained a degree of eminence in polite literature which fitted him to take a station among the distinguished men of his day, such as the celebrated Dr. Beattie, author of the "Minstrel," Professors Copland of Marischal, Ogilvie of King's College, and many others of equal rank with whom he was on terms of the best confidence and friendship. Added to his industry and talents, Mr. E. had yet other qualifications essentially necessary to enable a man to make a figure in society; he was a man of polished manners—so free, easy, and polite, and so gentlemanly, that it was quite a treat to see how



easy he could comport himself when the Duke of Gordon and the Marquis of Huntly, both of whom he had the honour to rank among his numerous and highly respectable circle of acquaintances, or any other nobleman or gentleman stepped into his shop. As has been already stated, Mr. Ewen was of very humble birth, but of what occupation his father was, we have never accurately ascertained. It has been repeatedly asserted that he was a wandering tinker; be that as it may, there are some individuals yet living who recollect the subject of our inquiry in the capacity of *travelling merchant*, or packman, going about the country selling buckles, sleeve-buttons, pen-knives, &c. How long he was occupied in this humble calling, we are unable to speak positively; but we have understood that he began to study the Latin language at the age of thirty, about which time, it is natural to suppose, that he entered into settled business. Our first personal recollections of Mr. Ewen are about fifty years ago, when the public mind in this city and neighbourhood was a good deal excited about borough reform. Soon after that, however, the French revolution broke out, and plunged the country into such a state of preparation for warfare, from one end to the other, that all manner of social improvement was lost sight of for many years after, unless, indeed, things for which there was such a necessity as they could not be done without. Among these was a police-bill for this city, in which Mr. Ewen

took so active a part, that he has justly been entitled the father of it, like Lord Brougham, or rather Henry Brougham, with the London University. He carried it on his shoulders through all its stages, in opposition to the magistrates; and, after watching its progress, along with John Jamieson, citizen and shipowner, who was his co-adjutor on that occasion, together with the able assistance of Mr. Perry of the *Morning Chronicle*, he at length brought his vessel safely into port, to the great joy of all the liberal citizens.

Mr. Ewen, as a matter of course, was returned by his fellow-citizens a Commissioner of the Police Board, and, if we recollect right, retained his seat at the Board during the remainder of his life, and uniformly devoted a large portion of his time to improve the city, and to add greatly to the comfort of its inhabitants.

Although the time that Mr. Ewen devoted to the public in the management of the affairs of the police, was more than could reasonably be required from any private citizen, yet he had always time to spare to take a part in promoting public and private charity, and his purse was always open to relieve cases of necessity, and his persuasive eloquence ready to induce others to imitate so good an example.

The subject of our biography, although so worthy of imitation by his fellow citizens in his public character, was also possessed of social qualities of

a very endearing nature. His inoffensive wit and playful raillery, always guided with sterling good sense, made him a valuable acquisition in the private circle, as well as a leader in public amusements. On several occasions, Mr. E. showed a good deal of tact in the histrionic art, by getting up plays for public charities, in which several of the students from both colleges, as well as other gentlemen citizens, were his coadjutors.

On one of these occasions he spoke a prologue, in his own individual character as a shop tradesman, the introductory lines of which were—

“ Once more, ladies and gentlemen,  
John Ewen see before you.”

These lines were the means of turning the laugh against “ our very good friend ” on many occasions, and for many years after, from the following circumstance :—Mr. Ewen, from his superabundant politeness, used sometimes to perambulate the streets at night, with a small lantern in his hand for the purpose of escorting ladies home from evening parties. On one of these occasions (it was before the introduction of his Police Bill) in coming up to a party with whom there was a gentleman, from the bad pavement of the street, or the no pavement at all, he slipped his foot and fell down before them ; and before he had time to recover himself, the gentleman pronounced the first stanza of the prologue, “ Once more, ladies, John Ewen see before you.”

Mr. E. was considered a man of excellent taste in literature, and occasionally evinced it by the publication of articles in the public prints, touching borough reform; and although he did not live to see that great and desirable measure accomplished, there was no individual in our community who had the object more at heart, and very few, indeed, if any, could have contributed more powerfully to bring that measure about, than Mr. E. did, which, from his long life, his steady zeal in the cause, his knowledge of the subject, and his tact and talents, enabled him to do. Although the tide of party politics did not then flow so high as it unfortunately does now, even to the separation of, and breaking up family friendships, Mr. E. felt a laudable interest in watching the motions of the State, and sometimes contributed an article to the *Morning Chronicle*, the then proprietor and editor, Mr. James Perry, being his acquaintance and personal friend. Mr. Perry used sometimes to submit Mr. E.'s articles to Charles Fox, who entertained so high an opinion of them as to declare that he knew not a better political writer in the north. Mr. E. likewise had a good taste in the arts, and long before his death, he had made a tolerably good collection of pictures.

Previous to his death, Mr. Ewen was some time confined to his room, and during that period, with the assistance of his friend, the late David Hutcheon, advocate, he prepared and executed a

settlement of his affairs, bequeathing the bulk of his property, amounting to about £16,000, for the endowment of an hospital for the maintenance and education of the sons of working tradesmen, similar to the valuable institution in this city, known by the name of Robert Gordon's Hospital. This settlement, however, was disputed at law by an only daughter, who succeeded in ultimately reducing it in the House of Lords, after it had been litigated for some years in the Court of Session in Edinburgh, and the Chancery Courts in London.

The final judgment, I well remember, was pronounced by Lord Windford, better known as Justice Best of the Common Pleas. I was in the House at the time, and can remember the very language used by the learned lord on the occasion, which was anything but complimentary to the deceased. I recollect having remarked at the time to a friend how very erroneous the opinion was that the learned judge had formed of Mr. Ewen's character and motives, and I added that I knew no man living who could have answered to the observations made on the occasion than the worthy individual himself, who could and would have done it in a style of mild but dignified rebuke, after which he could have said with great propriety, "Have not I a right to do what I like with my own?" The judgment pronounced on Mr. E.'s will took place soon after the Earl of Eldon retired from public life. Had his great talents, calm and dis-

criminating judgment, been brought to bear on the whole case, the decision might have turned other-ways.

In making his will, Mr. Ewen's sagacity foresaw what afterwards turned out to be the case. His daughter's husband, who had deserted her many years, soon after returned from America to this country, and took possession of the greater part of the property, although he never cohabited with his wife, and studiously avoided having any intercourse with an only son, the fruits of their marriage.

It had been often rumoured about, by envious individuals, and asserted that Mr. Ewen, with all his pretensions to honour and integrity, and his high bearing as a tradesman, as they termed it, had more than once, nay, repeatedly, compounded with his creditors. The writer of this article was many years acquainted with him, and who was an ardent admirer of his character, was at great pains to ascertain the truth or falsehood of these assertions, and had the satisfaction to find out that they were altogether without foundation. In the first place, he was on the most intimate terms of confidence and friendship with a house in London, with which Mr. E. had been dealing during a period of many years, from the time he had commenced business; and on the question being put to the principal in that concern, (Mr. T., watchmaker), he, in the most unequivocal manner, stated at once, that he, Mr. Ewen, never did pay, or sought to pay,

them with less than twenty shillings per pound. Further, this gentleman, Mr. T., was in the habit of coming here on business for many years, and I recollect of his having stated to me that there was a balance of £45 that had stood against Mr. E. in their books for a period of years, and that it had never been included in his payments, which were made always regularly by remittances. This omission at length was brought on the carpet, in order that it might be settled somehow. Mr. E. insisted on its having been duly paid, as he could show by his books. This, however, could only be considered presumptive evidence; and Mr. Ewen was fortunate in obtaining, in his banker's hands, the very draft that had been remitted on the occasion in question. The writer of this was a witness to the transaction, and acted as a mutual friend on the occasion, and could not but admire the good feeling and gentlemanly conduct exhibited on either side, in an affair that run so great a risk of being involved in a long and expensive litigation. In the second place, he made inquiry of the late Thomas Turreff, who was many years his shopman, who also bore testimony to the same effect, besides which, he explained the cause that gave rise to the invidious report, by stating that he remembered, on one occasion, of Mr. E. having experienced some difficulties in his business, and at that time he wrote to his creditors requiring an extent of credit, which was readily granted, and the promise on Mr. E.'s

part was most honourably fulfilled. Walter Thom, the historian of Aberdeen, named him, Mr. Ewen, the key to our good city for half a century. His political creed was of the true Whig school; and although he never disguised his opinions when there was occasion to bring them forth, yet they were always so free from asperity, and at the same time supported by sound and reasonable argument, that they never gave offence; and it is somewhat remarkable that in this extensive county there was scarcely a family connected with the landed or mercantile interest who did not number him among its friends, were they either Whig, Tory, or Radical.

This is a rapid sketch of an individual and fellow-citizen, drawn up by one who, from his opportunities and limited endowments, is but ill-qualified for the task; however, should it have the effect of drawing the attention of any gentleman to the subject, whose better acquaintance with the character and capabilities of doing it justice, his object will thereby be obtained. He can only say, in summing up the whole, that Mr. Ewen's chief characteristic was consummate good sense, an endowment, according to an eminent author, the parent and guide of every accomplishment.

“ Good sense, which only is the gift of heaven,  
And, though no science, fairly worth the seven.  
A light within yourself, you must perceive;  
Jones and Le Notre have it not to give.”

POPE.



## SIMON GRANT,

TOWN-SERGEANT.

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THE demise, lately, of this well-known individual, who for so many years occupied a conspicuous and useful station in Aberdeen, has led me to contemplate upon the many changes I have seen in the ever-changing scene of the different individuals filling the different official situations in the executive of a large and populous city like Aberdeen.

Being born and brought up next door (I may say), to the Town-house, I can recollect every individual *personally*, who has strutted his hour officially at the *Chamer* for nearly sixty years; from my Lord Provosts Jopp, Cruden, Abercrombie, Dingwall, down to John Home; from *Geordie Forbes*, the Fiscal, to Geordie Shand, the Sheriff-officer, as well as all the other accessories necessarily attached to the due administration of justice in a large city and county.

The birth and parentage of the heroes of all dabblers in biography is considered and looked for by their readers as a most essential and primary part of their narrative, and I would willingly follow this rule, as regards my hero, Simon Grant, did I possess the necessary information, but which, un-

fortunately, I do not. I am of opinion, however, that he was not a native of Aberdeen, although he must have come there at an early age.\* I recollect his mother very well, who lived along with Simon for years after he became a town's-officer. She, at least, was from the Highlands, as her strong highland accent determined that she was from a part of Scotland where the Gaelic language was principally spoken; she was, in fact, according to Aberdeen phraseology, "unca heeland." She was well known about the neighbourhood of the *Chamer*, and went by the simple, familiar, and kindly appellation of *Simon's mither*. As for Simon himself, I recollect him ever since I was a mere child, from the circumstances, that he was *kitchey laddie* to Dr. Gordon and his brother, Charles, the lawyer, who then lived in that house which formed the entrance to the Black Bull Close.

A circumstance occurred in which Simon was the principal actor, while serving the Messrs. Gordon, which, from the effect it had on me at the time, has stamped Simon, as connected with it, on my mind, not to be forgotten.

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\* We learn from good authority, that Mr. Grant's name was *Simon Fraser Grant*, and that he was a natural son of a Highland laird. That he came to Aberdeen with his mother, when he was a mere child, and that he distinguished himself, among the boys at play on the Plainstones, by his fleetness in running, and his general activity, and also from his occasionally inadvertently expressing himself in the Gaelic language.—*Editor*.

They (the Gordons), had a farm somewhere about Siller Burn, and Simon had frequent journeys out and in to the farm, always accompanied by a fine large white-and-brown spaniel dog named "Juba." Juba was a great favourite of mine, and when in town he (Juba), made regular calls upon his next-door neighbour, to pick up the odds and ends that is always to be found about a public-house.

Simon was a bit of a sportsman, even at this time a-day, when but a youth, and he was long known as a brother in that way in earlier manhood, and considered a good *shot*. He kept, generally, for years, a well broke-in pointer, as part of his establishment, either for his own use or to oblige a *brother shot*. Simon one day, when at the farm, had sallied forth with his master's dog and gun, to enjoy a little sport. Juba had performed his part of the business, and Simon let fly at the game, but from some accidental circumstance or other, he unfortunately shot poor Juba dead on the spot. This circumstance nearly cost Simon his place, and the death of my kind friend, poor Juba, cost me at the time a good deal of childish sorrow.

Simon, from the circumstance of living so near the *Chamer*, and also from being in the service of a lawyer, became imperceptibly, before he had arrived at manhood, a kind of official *attaché* at the little Plainstones before the *Chamer* door, and when he left the Messrs. Gordon, depended for a liveli-

hood on the services he performed to the *officials* there.

About this period, there was an individual (then getting an old man), whose celebrity in his particular line of business, was for years equally famous, as that of his successor, Simon Grant's, ever was. This individual was the then well-known Charles Clapperton.

Charlie Clapperton (always accompanied by his dog "Help"), was long a public character in Aberdeen, as a constable; and so notorious was his name and celebrity, that when, at his death, Simon Grant was appointed his successor, he (Simon) was known as *young Clapperton*.

Clapperton's official duties were entirely limited to finding out and apprehending thieves and suspicious characters, and bringing them before their Honours, the Baillies. He had nothing to do with the different courts, as regarded summonsing, &c., he was simply a constable or officer, like those attached to the Police Courts of London. His official costume was a plain blue coat, with a red collar, and when Simon succeeded him, he also wore the same distinctive dress. There was also at this time, and no doubt had long been, another official character, who was rather considered of a more inferior grade than the Town-house folks, yclept the cleeker. The cleeker's duties were to take into custody all vagrants of the begging fraternity, either old, blind, lame, or lazy, who might make their

appearance, and exercise their calling within the four Bows. The regular *allowed* begging poor wearing badges on their breasts, to denote their privilege.

All the vagrant begging crew, on coming into Aberdeen, invariably bent their way to the Justice Port, Sinclair's Close, or some of the numerous nameless holes and bores of that densely populated and *classical* neighbourhood. It was, indeed, *the holy land* of Aberdeen, the St. Giles's of the *north*, the appointed place of rendezvous, where all those travellers met.

Here travellers might be comfortably accommodated for the night, with a "guid strae shak-down i' the floor, at a bawbee or a penny a-head," and those of the fraternity who could afford it, might be elevated upon a wooden-bottomed bedstead, covered with some old sacks, sewed together and stuffed with chaff, which served the different purposes of mattress, feather-bed, and bolster; here they might *luxuriate* for the night at twopence a-head. The articles of blankets, &c., were considered as superfluous; they turned in rags—rags just as they stood. This arrangement saved them a good deal of trouble in the morning, for they were *up and dressed* in a moment, fit to sally forth to the street and begin business *instantly*, only giving themselves a good hearty shake, in order to make their *professional duds* find their respective bearing, and give to their

persons the necessary characteristic appearance in the eyes of the charitable.

The cleeker lodged his prisoners in one of the low vaults of the old Workhouse, until his Honour the Bailie or the Fiscal had leisure to go into the case. If they were found to be impostors, besides being obliged to leave the town forthwith, they, perhaps, were sentenced to the not very enviable distinction of a *drumming* out, with all its attendant official necessary accompaniments, as far as the Bow Brig.

For their Honours, the Bailies, were always *humane enough* to send their vagrants *all south*, and, for which compliment, the authorities in the south no doubt considered themselves *particularly obliged* to their brethren of Aberdeen.

The situation of cleeker, I think, was a kirk-session appointment, and was not considered eligible to the privilege of *walking the Little Plainstones* by, and along with, the dignitaries in red. I never knew but one cleeker; the office ceased with its last possessor, as that also of *Clapperton* merged into the town-sergeant, when Simon Grant was appointed one.

The present six town-sergeants are the third, and merging towards the fourth generation, in my time. Those filling this situation in my childish days, and afterwards, until they dropped off, one by one, in the common course of nature, were James Hay, Hugh Rose, John Smith, James Stewart, David Turriff,

and William Anderson; and these were succeeded by Robert Cantly, Simon Grant, Richard Merchant, George Turriff, Benjamin Clark, &c. &c.

The situation of town's-sergeant was one of those ancient recognized rights exclusively belonging to decayed burgesses, and those six first mentioned were all burgesses, either of Guild or Trade.

The Magistrates (however unwillingly), were obliged to depart from this custom, owing to the duties of town-sergeant becoming more arduous; so much so, that an old (or elderly man), was very unfit for it, the population, in my time, increasing one hundred per cent.

Although this situation, in all former times, was considered the exclusive right of decayed burgesses, yet it is notorious, since the necessary departure from the good old rule took place, that appointments to this office have taken place in the persons of individuals, from a distance of 150 miles north, while, at the same time, there were candidates for the situation, born and brought up in Aberdeen. However, the unnatural propensity of the authorities of Aberdeen for employing strangers, has been a subject of remark ever since I was old enough to reflect on these matters.

If there was a situation vacant, of anything of a respectable or comfortable nature, and a stranger made his appearance as a candidate, rigged out in all his best, with a handful of cut and dry testimonials in his favour, ten chances to one but he

got the appointment, in preference to any of the decent resident inhabitants, who might be candidates for it at the time.

The sending to London, some years ago, for a Bow-street officer to come down to Aberdeen, and be installed as head thief-catcher for the city, was a trite example of this vile propensity. It was understood that he (the officer), was to teach the flats of the profession in the *north*, the most approved Lunnan system of thief-catching, as practised at those celebrated establishments, the Mansion-House and Bow-street. What folly ! I would have backed Simon Grant alone, or any other shrewd, active, intelligent inhabitant of Aberdeen, against half-a-dozen such fellows. The least reflection would have convinced any person, possessed of common sense, that before this individual could have been fit to have picked out the thieves from among the community, it would have been first necessary for him to have had some general knowledge of the honest men. Their Honours (good, easy men), must have supposed, that the moment a person was installed into the office of a Bow-street officer, he also, “by *some devilish cantrip slight*,” acquired imperceptibly, a kind of supernatural gift, as regarded his nasal organs, which directed him to a thief, like a *pointer dog to a partrick*.

However, the man went down to Aberdeen, and in due time the man came up here again, and thus ended the grand magisterial scheme of catching



thieves in Aberdeen by instinct, after the Lunnan method. However, since the passing of the Reform Bill, I would fain hope that "they order these things better in Aberdeen now," than they did some years back.

The situation of town's-sergeant lays its possessor open to much temptation of becoming a tippler. This arises, in a great measure, from individuals having business before the different courts, requiring information of some sort or other, and they generally apply to some one of the town-sergeants for this purpose, and, as a kind of recompence for their information, they are invited to partake of something to drink. Simon Grant, however, was always proof against this practice; he was, indeed, a truly sober man through life.

His sober habits, and attention to the duties of his situation, placed him at the head of his brethren in his official capacity, and, perhaps, for many years he did more business himself, than the rest of his brethren put together. He frequently, if not permanently, found himself obliged to employ a person as his clerk, to enable him to get through with his business, and, from his long life, his temperate habits, and the multiplicity of official business which passed through his hands, it may naturally be considered, that at his death, his pecuniary concerns were far above par with the world.

A few of the old Bow-street officers of London, who, in their day (like Simon in Aberdeen), were

always employed when any daring or extensive robbery was committed, have died lately, leaving their thousands of pounds behind them. They were noted for the tact and vigilance they displayed in following up any, the least, clue which was furnished them regarding the persons who might be suspected as the depredators, and as there were occasionally large rewards offered for their apprehension by the public authorities, as well, sometimes, as by individuals, they netted large sums in this way. They were occasionally also engaged by private individuals in peculiar cases of emergency, for which services they were handsomely remunerated.

There is no doubt, that if Simon Grant had been a resident in London for any length of time, and afterwards had been appointed an officer of Bow-street, he would, from his natural capabilities in this peculiar line, have equalled old Townshend or two or three others lately defunct, but as the field of Simon's professional usefulness was narrowed in comparison of Aberdeen with London, he never had the chance of pocketing the large sums for his services which those individuals did for theirs.

Simon was very seldom to be found as one of a social party, engaging themselves at a tavern. The only individual that I ever knew him associate with in this way, was Joseph Alexander, better known as Deaf Joe, but this was in Simon's younger days.

Simon was known to pay great deference to Joe's judgment in most matters. They were both excellent shots, and, at the period alluded to, each kept his dog and gun. Poor Joe's position in society at this period, was certainly of a higher grade than Simon's, but, unfortunately for poor Joe, that position was sadly reversed long before his death.

Simon, in his day, was a fine, handsome, good-looking young fellow, active as a bee, and nimble as a greyhound. He was a bit of a favourite with the ladies, but was considered by them to have a *leetle* of the rake in his composition. He was twice married, and both his wives were reckoned handsome women. His first wife, Betty Naughton, (whose father was a sheriff's-officer), was a fine, tall, active, good-looking young woman, as you would have seen in a day's journey. His second wife has not been dead many years; he had no children by either of his wives, but he had an illegitimate daughter, who afterwards lived along with Simon for sometime. Simon, from his strictly moral character, and also from his gentlemanly and respectful deportment, was a great favourite with all the different gentlemen who filled the honourable distinction of either Provost or Bailies during his long life, and he possessed an influence with his superiors about the Town-house, which none of his contemporaries could lay claim to.

Simon, after a long life (seventy-five), has been gathered to his fathers. He was, I understand,

able to step about his usual business, until within a few days of his death. The Magistrates had, very lately, in consideration of his long and useful services, appointed him an assistant and successor ; but, as in the case of John Smith, when Richard Merchant was appointed to act in the same capacity toward him, Simon, like John Smith, lived but a very short period after this arrangement took place, and, as the last tribute of honourable respect which could be paid to Simon's memory, the Magistrates followed his remains to the grave in their *official* capacity, attended by the town-sergeants, in the usual manner of official public processions.

